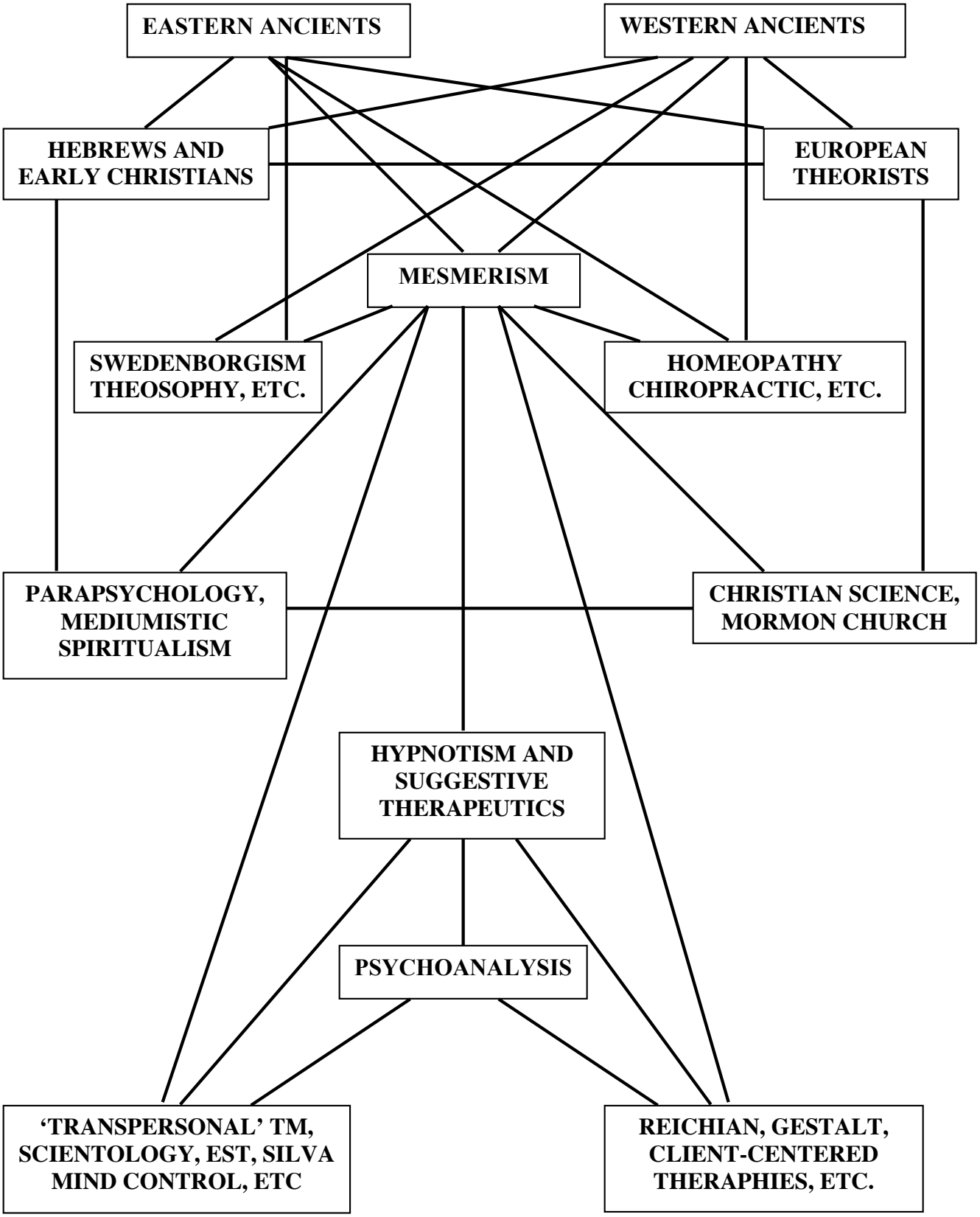
MESMERISM: BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

BY B. BRILLIANT 1987



MESMERISM: A STUDY OF ITS IDEAS, THEIR ORIGINS, AND THEIR EFFECT ON TODAY'S MODERN THERAPIES

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Introduction

Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1805) has always been a controversial figure. During his lifetime and on into the present he has been regarded as a physician, scientist and healer by some, and a charlatan and mountebank by others.

Now that the study of "human energies" has become fashionable, mesmerism is slowly emerging from the shadows. Mesmer is beginning to be hailed as a pioneer, the father of hypnotism and related psychotherapies--an original thinker far in advance of his time. In fact, Mesmer introduced no original thoughts, but instead systemized existing knowledge into a marketable healing system.

Mesmedsm's direct antecedents lay in the concept of "animal magnetism" which emerged mid-sixteenth century. At that time, a theory arose that ascribed to man the power of exercising qualities comparable to those of a magnet--perhaps by analogy with the effect of sexual attraction. Long before, in the ancient world, magnets were considered to have curative powers and were often used as a remedy. This belief persisted to and beyond Mesmer's time, and for some, continues to this day.

One of the first written references to animal magnetism appears in the works of the Swiss physician and alchemist Paracelsus (14937-1541). He maintained that the human body is endowed with a kind of double magnetism, one portion of which is attracted to the planets, whence come thoughts and emotions. The other portion comes from the earth and governs our corporeal being. Further, the attraction and hidden nature of man resembles the magnet on the physical level and amber on the psychic level. Paracelsus thought the magnetic strength of healthy persons attracts the weak magnetism of the sick.

After Paracelsus, many other learned men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries--Glocenius, Burgrave, Helintius, Fludd, Kircher, Maxwell et al.--believed that one could recognize in the magnet the operation of universal principles. Mesmer read many of the books written by these men. It is probable that he also was exposed to old Chinese texts on the healing meridians of the body and the balancing of energy flows to achieve health. Thus, he was well prepared to break new ground in the healing arts, which he did by applying principles of magnetism and the use of "laying on of hands."

Mesmer did not discover animal magnetism; he merely rediscovered, renamed, and explored a phenomenon that may be as old as the human race itself. Under many different labels ("divine afflatus," "prana," "odic force," "chi," or even "god"), it was used in ancient times by priests and

magicians to heal the sick or make oracular prognostications. From his observations, Mesmer concluded that the "force" operates like magnetism, yet is generated by the human body. Most of the early "fluidists" saw the human body in terms of energy flow. Today we call these powers "human energies"; but whether they are indeed inherent, as all things channel an outside source, is a point of conjecture.

Then, what *is* mesmerism? Most people equate it with hypnosis and its practice, hypnotism, but it is not hypnotism. The history of mesmerism necessarily includes the history of hypnotism, since the latter sprang, at least in part, from the former. But there are major distinctions between the two.

To learn about mesmerism is to understand more about hypnotism, for they scale the same mountain, but from different sides. Hypnotism employs a more psychologically oriented, verbal system; mesmerism uses a more physiological, "energy"-oriented method to produce the desired effect in the patient or subject. Repetition is a component of the psychological process, while intensity involves the physiological. In hypnosis intensity plays a minor role; in mesmerism it is paramount. Thus, the two therapies are polarities of each other, yet are closely interrelated.

In the late eighteenth century, the commissions that were appointed to investigate Mesmer's claims declared that animal magnetism was nonexistent, and that any cures reported were the product of a "stimulated imagination." What they were unaware of is that "stimulated imagination" is a powerful force in both the onset of disease and its cure.And the relationship is reciprocal: the mind affects the body, the body affects the mind.

Mesmer may have been incorrect in many particulars of his theories.* But his successes cannot be ignored. If contemporary reports are to be believed, the percentage of cures achieved by Mesmer, his students, and later researchers, using his systemized concepts, was astonishing -- far higher than the best hypnotic methods now in use.

This thesis recounts the life and career of Anton Mesmer, examines the historical antecedents of the ideas associated with Mesmerism, and the influence of Mesmer's theories and practices in emerging religion and on the development of modern psychotherapies.

Appendix A contains a history of hypnosis (McGill, O. and Barry Brilliant, 1978, unpublished). In innumerable readings on the subject, and consultations with experts in the field, we encountered such disagreement about the path leading from antiquity to present-day hypnosis, that we found it necessary to create our own account. I believe it to be an accurate one.

In Appendix B I quote directly from Mesmer's writings, adding my own commentary.

Appendix C is an annotated biblography and Appendix D is an additional bibliography.

Mesmer's Life And Career

Franz Anton Mesmer was born in the little Austrian village of Iznang, on May 23, 1734. His father was an official of the forestry department. Intended for the priesthood, the boy was educated by monks until he was fifteen; then he went to the Jesuit University at Dillingen in Bavaria, and from there to Ingoldstat University. But young Franz had an original, inquiring mind that refused to be shut away behind the heavy doors of religious dogma. Having decided that he and the Church were not suited for each other, he instead obtained a degree in philosophy. In 1759 he arrived at the University of Vienna as a law student but soon abandoned law for medicine, graduating as a physician on November 20, 1766.

At that time he publicly read his doctoral dissertation, *Disputation de Planetarium Influxu (Concerning the Influence of the Planets),* to which he later added the words *in Corpus Humanus* (on the Human Body). This early work, to which he refers in his *Memoire,* contains the germ of his subsequent Twenty-seven Propositions on Animal Magnetism (see later this chapter and Appendix B).

After the publication of this work, Mesmer made the acquaintance of the Jesuit Father Hell, professor of astronomy, who in 1774 settled in Vienna and began curing the sick by the use of magnetic steel rods drawn over the body. Mesmer discovered connections between Hell's procedures and his own magnetic astronomical theories, and experimented with magnets to see what effects would be produced in the treatment of diseases. It was in the course of this investigation that he devised his method of magnetizing with his hands rather than with actual magnets.[1] While Mesmer got many ideas from fluidists before him, it was Father Hell who gave him the opportunity to experiment with magnets. If a personality conflict had not developed between them, Mesmer would probably have continued using magnets in his treatments instead of postulating the concept of animal magnetism. Healing with hand passes became the method for Mesmer's "Animal Magnetism" treatment, and it seemed to work.

Accounts of his cures filled the Vienna newspapers. Several prominent people reported they had been cured, including d'Osterwald, director of the Munich Academy of Science, who was afflicted with paralysis, and Bauer, a professor of mathematics, who had suffered from eye problems. On the other hand, the learned bodies of his native country did not accept his experi-

Alfred Binet and Charles Fere, *Animal Magnetism* (London:Kegan Paul, Trench **& Co.,** 1887), page 4.

ments, and the letters he wrote to most of the academies of Europe remained unanswered. Mes-mer soon totally abandoned the use of the magnet and restricted himself to passes with the hands, declaring animal magnetism to be distinct from physical magnetism?

The hue and cry of the Viennese doctors over Mesmer's unconventional practice caused him to leave that city in 1778 and move to Paris. He first established himself in a humble quarter of the city, Pl,~ce Vend6me, and began to expound his theory of the magnetic fluid. He asked the Royal Academy of Sciences to verify his discoveries, which they declined to do, as did the Royal Society of Medicine. He did receive notice from the medical faculty at the University of Paris, most notably in the form of converts such as Chades D'Eslon, a *docteur regent* of the faculty and *premier m6decin* of the Comte d'Artois. However, as Mesmer's practice grew and he acquired more and more attention, he was frequently attacked in pamphlets and articles, in the *Journal de M6decine* and the *Gazette de Sant,* by doctors opposing his methods.[3] His ideas were rejected without any investigation until 1784, when a commission was finally formed to look into his cures.[4] Mesmer and his followers retaliated in kind, and the stage was set for the opposition and anger toward the medical and scientific establishment that would often appear in mesmerist writing. This print battle served to increase public interest in the ideas of mesmerism. Mesmer's appeal, due partly to this attention, grew until the report of the commission investigation was issued in 1784.

In 1779, after moving to Paris, Mesmer published a paper on the relation of magnetism to the human body, in which he announced he had discovered a principle capable of curing all diseases. He summed up his theory in twenty-seven propositions. The propositions are grouped in four areas of emphasis: the universal source of the energy Mesmer calls animal magnetism; the relationship of this energy to the human body; the nature and function of this energy; and its r61e in curing disease.

Mesmer formulated most of these axioms through deductive reasoning; that is, through twelve years' study of his patients' maladies and the effects of his treatments, from which he drew general principles. Though his propositions deal with "cosmic" connections, they were, in his thinking, directly related to the health or illness of the human body and mind.

4
/bM.

Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 48-50.

[It is not surprising that mesmerism eventually entered the entertainment arena, since this was the only way it could gain publicity, and, more important, credibility.]

THE TWENTY-SEVEN PROPOSITIONS

1. There exists a mutual influence between the Heavenly Bodies, the Earth and Animate Bodies.

2. A universally distributed and continuous fluid, which is quite without vacuum and of an incomparably rarefied nature, and which by its nature is capable of receiving, propagating, and communicating all the impressions of movement, is the means of this influence.

3. This reciprocal action is subordinated to mechanical laws that are hitherto unknown.

4. This action results in alternate effects that may be regarded as an Ebb and Flow.

5. This ebb and flow is more or less general, more or less particular, more or less composite according to the nature of the causes determining it.

6. It is by this operation (the most universal of those presented by Nature) that the activity ratios are set up between the heavenly bodies, the earth and its component parts.

7. The properties of Matter and the Organic Body depend on this operation.

8. The animal body sustains the alternate effects of this agent, which by insinuating itself into the substance of the nerves, *affects them at once.*

9. It is particularly manifest in the human body that the agent has properties similar to those of the magnet; different and opposite poles may likewise be distinguished, which can be changed, communicated, destroyed and strengthened; even the phenomenon of dipping is observed.

10. The properly of the animal body, which brings it under the influence of the heavenly bodies, and the reciprocal action of those surrounding it, as shown by its analogy with the Magnet, induced me to term it ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

11. The action and properties of Animal Magnetism, thus defined, may be communicated to other animate and inanimate bodies. Both are

more or less susceptible to it.

12. This action and properties may be strengthened and propagated by the same bodies.

13. Experiments show the passage of a substance whose rarefied nature enables it to penetrate al/bodies without appreciable loss of activity.

14. Its action is exerted at a distance, without the aid of an intermediate body.

15. It is intensified and reflected by mirrors, like light.

16. It is communicated, propagated and intensified by sounds.

17. This magnetic property may be stored up, concentrated and transported.

18. I have said that all animate bodies are not equally susceptible; there are some, a/though very few, whose properties are so opposed that their very presence destroys ali the effects of magnetism in other bodies.

19. This opposing property also penetrates al/bodies; it may likewise be communicated, propagated, stored, concentrated, and transported, reflected by mirrors and propagated by sound; this constitutes not merely the absence of magnetism, but a positive opposing properly.

20. The Magnet, both natural and artificial, together with other substances, is susceptible to Animal Magnetism, and even to the opposing properly, without its effect on iron and the needle undergoing any alteration in either case; this proves that the principle of Animal Magnetism differs essentially from that of mineral magnetism.

21. This system will furnish fresh explanations as to the nature of Fire and Light, as well as the theory of attraction, ebb and flow, the magnet and electricity.

22. It will make known that the magnet and artificial electricity only have, as regards illness, properties which they share with several other agents provided by Nature, and that if useful effects have been derived

from the use of the latter, they are due to Animal Magnetism.

23. It will be seen from the facts, in accordance with the practical rules I shall draw up, that this principle can cure nervous disorders directly and other disorders indirectly.

24. With its help, the physician is guided in the use of medicaments; he perfects their action, brings about and controls the beneficial crises in such a way as *to master them.*

25. By making known my method, I shall show by a new theory of illness the universal utility of the principle I bring to bear on them.

26. With this knowledge, the physician may determine reliably the origin, nature and progress of illnesses, even the most complicated; he will prevent them from gaining ground and will succeed in curing them without ever exposing the patient to dangerous effects of unfortunate consequence, whatever his age, temperament and sex. Women, even in pregnancy and childbirth, will enjoy the same advantage.

27. In conclusion, this doctrine will enable the physician to determine the state of each individual's health and safeguard him from the maladies to which he might otherwise be subject. The art of healing will thus reach its final stage of perfection.

A/though there is not one of these Assertions regarding which my constant observations over a period of twelve years leaves me in any uncertainty, I quite realize that compared with old-established principles and knowledge, my system may appear to contain as much illusion as truth. I must, however, ask *the enlightened to discard their prejudices and at least suspend judgement, until circumstances enable me to furnish the necessary evidence of my principles. Consideration for those languishing in pain and unhappiness through the very inadequacy of known methods is well calculated to inspire the desire for and even the hope of more useful methods.*

Physicians, being the repositories of public trust for everything connected with the preservation and happiness of mankind, are a/one enabled, by the knowledge on which their profession is founded, to judge of the importance of the discovery I have just announced and realize its implications. In a word, they alone are qualified to put it into

practice.

As I have the privilege of sharing the dignity of their profession, I am in no doubt whatever that they will hasten to adopt and spread principles intended to alleviate the sufferings of humanity, as soon as they realize the importance of this Dissertation, written essentially for them, on the true conception of ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

Mesmer's doctrines met with success. Pupils and patients flowed in. The moment was favorable, since rnany people's minds were stirred by recent discoveries and were open to any science that afforded a new horizon.[5]

It seemed as if all Paris wished to be "magnetized". The crowd was so great that Mesmer sometimes had to employ assistants to perform some of the treatments. Even this did not suffice, so Mesmer invented his famous *baquet.* This was a circular oaken tub, about a foot high, which stood in the center of a dimly lighted room. The walls of the room were draped with heavy curtains, and large mirrors were hung in the corners. At the bottom of the wooden tub, on a layer of powdered glass and iron filings, were placed bottles full of water, symmetrically arranged so that their necks converged toward the center. Another layer was arranged in the opposite direction, with necks toward the circumference. All the objects within the tub were immersed in water. A lid covering the tub was pierced with holes through which issued jointed and movable iron rods, which were held by the patients. While absolute silence reigned, as many as thirty patients at a time were brought in and grouped in circles of several rows about the *baquet,* so that all could be treated together. The patients were linked by ropes passed around their bodies and by a second chain formed by joining hands. As they waited, music was heard, proceeding from a piano placed in the adjoining room, and often accompanied by a song. The atmosphere was "electric" with expectancy. Then, apparently influenced by animal magnetism (also referred to as "magnetic effluvia") issuing from the *baquet,* the patients would experience curious reactions, as reported by an eyewitness?

> *Some patients remain calm and experience nothing; others cough, spit, feel slight pain, a local or general heat, and fa//into sweats; others are agitated and tormented by convulsions. These convulsions are remarkable for their number, duration, and* force, *and have been known to persist for more than three hours. They are characterized by*

William B. Carpenter, *Mesmerism, Spiritualism, &C* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1887), p. 10.

Binet and Fere, 8-9.

involuntary jerking movements in all the limbs, and the whole body, by contraction of the throat, by twitchings of the hypochondriac and epigastric regions, by dimness of vision and rolling of the eyes, by piercing cries, tears, hiccough, and immoderate laughter. They are preceded or fo/lowed by a state of languor or dreaminess, by a species of depression, and even by stupor. The slightest sudden noise causes the patient to start, and it has been observed that he is affected by a change in the music performed on the pianoforte; and, that his agitation is increased in tempo with the rhythm of the music. It appears that the more livefy becomes the movement of the music the more violent become the convulsions. Patients are seen to be absorbed in the search for one another, rushing together, smiling, talking affectionate/y, and endeavoring to modify their crises. They are all so submissive to the magnetizer that even when they appear to be in a stupor, his voice, a glance, or sign will rouse them from it. It is impossible not to admit, from ali these results, that some great force acts upon and masters the patients, and that this force appears to reside in the magnetizer. This convulsive state is termed 'the crisis." It has been observed that many women and few men are subject to such crises; that they are only established after the lapse of two or three hours, and that when one is established, others soon and successively begin. When the agitation exceeds certain limits, the patients are transported into a padded room; the women's corsets are un/aced, and they may then strike their heads against the padded wa/ls without doing themselves any injury.[7]

Mesmer, wearing a coat of lilac silk, walked up and down amid this palpitating crowd. He carried a long iron wand with which he touched the bodies of the patients, especially those parts that were diseased; often, laying aside the wand, he magnetized them with his eyes, fixing his gaze on theirs,or applying his hands to the hypochondriac region[8] and the lower part of the abdomen.[9] This application was sometimes continued for hours; and at other times, Mesmer made use of passes. In this process, he began by placing himself *en rapport* with his subject. Seated opposite the patient, foot against foot, knee against knee, he laid his fingers on the hypochondriac region and moved them in circular passes, occasionally touching the ribs. When stronger currents of animal magnetism were desired, long passes over the entire body of the

Binet and Fere, 10.
The upper lateral region of the abdomen, below the lowest ribs.
Binet and Fere, 11.

patient were employed. Louis Figuier describes the method: "Mesmer, erecting his fingers in a pyramid, passed his hands all over the patient's body, beginning with the head, and going down over the shoulders to the feet. He then returned again to the head, to the back and front, to the belly and the back; he renewed the process again and again, until the magnetized person was saturated with the healing fluid, and was transported with pain or pleasure, both sensations being equally salutary."[10]

The use of the *baquet* is a perfect example of Mesmer's employment of physical contact, seen in the use of the rod. Also here we see the incorporation of ritual, altered states of consciousness, music, incense, and intuitive processes, all combined to evoke a crisis reaction. Mesmer had to use intuitive processes in order to be aware of the group dynamics and direct the sessions accordingly. This focus on the philosophical implications of the ritual and the emphasis on wholeness and balance was incorporated in Mesmer's utilization of the *baquet.* Notions of animal magnetism and magnetic healing also existed in the minds of the patients before the *ba-quet,* thus adding expection to the experience. The configuration of the *baquet* is reminiscent of certain ancient depictions of ceremonies related to magnetic healing. Moreover, the *baquet* offered one more important concept which existed in the physical magnet; that of energy accumulator. The *baquet* epitomized in physical form all the concepts Mesmer had acquired from the other modalities to which he had been exposed.

It must have been fascinating to witness such scenes. Mesmer seems to have excited in his patients nervous crises displaying the principal signs of hysteric attacks.[11] Silence, music, darkness, a crowd gathered together in a confined space, and the emotional expectation of extraordinary events are conditions known to encourage convulsive crises in predisposed subjects. This is thought to be the mechanism that so often produces cases of "ecstasy" or "possession" during religious and voodoo ceremonies, and Mesmer's regimen bore a close resemblance to religious ritual. Mesmer's ritual drew attention away from the actual healings and caused him to be seen as something of a wizard, steeped in power and knowledge. Not surprisingly, with Mesmer's growing practice came a growth in vanity, as well as a heightened "mystical" demeanor.[12]

It is generally believed that the majority of Mesmer's patients were female, and that a large

10 Louis Figtrier, *Histoire du Merveilleux,* II (Paris, 1860), p. 20, quoted in Binet and Fere, *Animal Magnetism,* p. 11.

11 Binet and Fere, 11. Subsequent experiments at the Shlp6tri6re Hospital under Charcot demonstrated that hypnosis and hysteria are closely allied states.

12 Ormonde, "Mystery Unveiled," 19-20.

part of his clientele consisted of the elegant and frivolous aristocracy. However, records published in 1784, under the title *Supplement aux Deux Rapports de MM. les Commissaires,* paint a very different picture. These records summarize 103 cases and are for the most part written by the patients themselves? Of these fifty-six are men and forty-seven women. A good-sized proportion of the men are persons of high social position--marquises, counts, high officials and men of affairs, doctors, abbes, etc. There are also many upper-class women. The rest of the list includes domestic servants, artisans, and working men and women.[14]

The desire to submit to Mesmer's treatment soon became so great that the house in Place Vendome proved too small, and Mesmer purchased the Hotel Bullion, in which he established four *baquets,* one of them for the gratuitous use of the poor. Since even this did not suffice, Mesmer undertook to magnetize a tree at the end of the Rue Bondy, and thousands of sick people might be seen attaching themselves to it with cords, in hope of a cure?

This rage for Mesmer's treatment could not last long, and difficulties of all kinds assailed him. From his first arrival in Paris it took five years (1779-1784) for the Academy of Science, and the Royal Society of Medicine, to institute an inquiry into his experiments. However, they were unable to agree as to the conditions of this inquiry, and the meeting dissolved in anger. Mesmer was condemned without any examination of the facts and was threatened with having his name removed from the list of licensed physicians in Paris unless he amended his ways.[16]

Mesmer had decided he would leave Paris, when Marie-Antoinette intervened in his favor and offered him a life pension of 20,000 livres and another 10,000 a year to start a clinic if he would stay, under the requirement that he accept the observation of three government "pupils."[17] Mesmer refused after unsuccessful negotiations, stating in a letter to her 'the austerity of my principles." He did not like the feeling of judgement and the tone of bribery in her offer, yet it was also not enough money for his liking. Mesmer had asked Marie-Antoinette for a country estate besides, saying, what were 'tour or five hundred thousand francs more or less" to her Majesty?.[is]

13 Frank Podmore, *From Mesmer to Christian Science: A Short History of Mental Healing* (New Hyde Park: University Books, Inc., 1963), p. 10

14 *Ibid.,* 9-10.

15 Binet and Fete, 12. (It would seem that mesmerism had become a "health" fad.)

16 *Ibid., 12-13.*

17 Darnton, 51.

18 D'Onglee, *Rapport au Public,* p. 8 and Franz Anton Mesmer, *Precis Historique,* pp. 215-217, quoted in Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France,* p. 51.

Mesmer left France, but his absence was short. He was soon recalled by his disciples. The "philosopher-lawyer-hypochondriac", Nicolas Bergasse, and his best friend, Guillaume Kormann, who founded the *Socit~ de l'Harmonie Universelie* (Society of Universal Harmony) offered to provide Mesmer with income from a course of lectures in which he was to reveal his dis-coverles.[19] However, this course proved to be a source of dissension between the master and his students. Since the latter had, in effect, bought his secret, they felt themselves entitled to publish it in lectures to the public, but Mesmer claimed a monopoly on his discoveryMoreover, in spite of his promises, he never made a more complete explanation, doubtless because there was nothing more to tell: he had said it all in the twenty-seven propositions.[2°] Having postulated planetary influence and a universal fluid to account for the success of his methods, he was left with no way to substantiate those assumptions.[21] An omnipresent medium detectable only through its presumed effect on human beings does not make a good subject for physical research. Several of Mesmer's disciples who had paid a high price for his secret accused him of having enunciated a theory that was merely a collection of obscure principles; and in fact, they were correct:a number of the propositions are not models of clarity. Many of Mesmer's students, in reporting to D'Eslon (Mesmer's staunchest supporter) said in essence, 'q'hose who know the secret are more in the dark than those who are ignorant of it.,,22 Finally, the French government intervened, and in 1784 a commission was nominated to inquire into animal magnetism. This body consisted of members of the Faculty of Medicine and the Academy of Sciences. Bailly, the celebrated astronomer, was chosen as its reporter, and it included other illustrious men of the time, such as Benjamin Franklin, and Anton Lavoisier, the founder of modern chemistry. Another commission, composed of members of the Royal Society of Medicine, was also constituted, and charged to make a separate report on the same subject. The botanist Laurent de Jussieu, was included in this second group.[23]

D'Eslon, as a devout believer in the curative value of animal magnetism, had been making

19 Darnton, 51.

20 Binet and Fete, 10.
21 Mesmer, 4-5.

22 Binet and Fere, 13.
23 /b/d., 13-14.

use of it in his medical practice; thus, both men were subjected to study by the commissions. The basic question before these commissions concerned the existence of Mesmer's "magnetic fluid." D'Eslon proposed to demonstrate the reality of the fluid by displaying the cures he effected. But the commissioners rightly considered that this would prove nothing; they decided instead to observe the crises, 'the instantaneous effects of the magnetic fluid on the animal body, while depriving these effects of all the illusions which might be allied with them, and ascertaining that they could be due to other causes than animal magnetism.''[24] Like Mesmer, D'Eslon asserted that it was necessary to induce a crisis, which was produced and directed by the will of the magnetizer,[25] in order to assist or excite the efforts of nature, and thus produce a cure.[26]

The commissioners placed themselves under D'Eslon's treatment once a week, and experienced nothing, except, from time to time, after the session had continued for several hours, a slight nervous irritability or pain in the hollow of the abdomen, to which the physician had applied his hand? Upon witnessing the behavior of other patients, the commissioners observed that those who were treated in public were far more likely to experience crises than those treated in private. They were particularly struck by the fact that the crises did not occur unless the subjects were aware that they were being magnetized.[28]

For instance, in the experiments performed by Mesmer's disciple, "Jumlin", a woman who appeared to be a very sensitive subject was sensible to heat as soon as Jumlin's hand approached her body. Her eyes having been bandaged, she was informed that she was being magnetized, and she experienced the same sensation. But when she was magnetized without being informed of it, she experienced nothing. Conversely, several other patients were strongly affected when no magnetizing was going on.[29]

The investigators' final report found no virtue at all in mesmerism:

24 /b/d., p. 14.

25 [The extent of the magnetizer's influence is open to question. Modern hypnotists know that such crises can be self-induced by the subject as a form of self-hypnosis, though they may be augmented by the suggestions and actions of the hypnotist. Further, the expectation of the phenomenon appearing (on the part of both operator and subject) invites its oc~currence.]

26 Binet and Fere, 14.

27 [It is not surprising that these skeptical men of science were not susceptible to crises: there is no evidence that any of them were suffering from hysterical neurosis or psychosomatic illnesses.]

28 Binet and Fere, 15.

29 *Ibid*.

The commissioners have ascertained that the animal magnetic fluid is not perceptible by any of the senses, that it has no action, either on themselves or on the patients subjected to it. They are convinced that pressure and contact effect changes which are rarely favorable to the animal system, and which injuriously affect the imagination. FinaNy, they have demonstrated by decisive experiments that imagination apart from magnetism produces convulsions, and that magnetism without imagination produces nothing. They have come to the unanimous conclusion with respect to the existence and utility of magnetism that there is nothing to prove the existence of the animal magnetic fluid; that this fluid, since it is nonexistent, has no beneficial effect; that the violent effects observed in patients under public treatment are due to contact, to the excitement of the imagination, and to the mechanical imitation which involuntarily impels us to repeat that which strikes our senses. At the same time, they are compel/ed to add, since it is an important observation, that the contact and repeated excitement of the imagination which produce the crises may become hurtful; that the spectacle of these Crises is likewise dangerous, on account of the imitative faculty which is a law of nature; and consequently that al/ treatment in public in which magnetism is employed must in the end be productive of evil results.

(Signed) B. FRANKLIN, MAJAUT, LE ROY, SALIN, BAILLY, D'ARCET, DE BORY, GUILLOT/N, LAVOISIER

Paris, August 11, 17843o

Another report issued by the commission at the same time stated: "We conclude by saying that there are no real cures, and the treatment is tedious and unprofitable? There are patients who have been under treatment for eighteen months or two years without deriving any benefit

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31
Ibid., 16-17.

Hundreds of patients testified to the reality of their cures. What the commissions overlooked was that, irrespective of the existence or nonexistence of animal magnetism, they were witnessing a valuable form of mental healing. However, many years were to elapse before the importance of psychotherapy was recogni?ed by scientific bodies.

from it; at length their patience is exhausted, and they cease to come.[32] The crises serve as a spectacle; they are an occupation and interest; and, moreover, they are to the unobservant the result of magnetism, a proof of the existence of that agent, although they are really due to the power of the imagination."[33] Obviously, the commission could not see Mesmer's twenty-seven propositions as a universal system that incorporated many ideas from the past.

D'Eslon's reply to the commission was, "If the medicine of the imagination is the most efficient, why should we not make use of it?"[34] In this he showed rare perception--a glimmering of what lay ahead in the developing field of hypnotherapy.

The Royal Society of Medicine presented its report five days later; it came to the same conclusions. But one member of the commission, Laurent de Jussieu, dissented from his colleagues. With scientific courage, he published a separate report containing his convictions on the subject.

De Jussieu had performed some experiments with animal magnetism that he thought could not be explained by imagination. The results demonstrated, in his opinion, that man produced a sensible action upon his fellows by friction, by contact, and, more rarely, by simple proximity. This action, ascribed to the as-yet-unproved universal fluid, was, he said, certainly due to animal heat, which he elsewhere terms "animalized electric fluid." As to the theory of animal magnetism, he did not reject it as absolutely as Bailly, who said, "Everything is done by the imagination; magnetism has nothing to do with it." De Jussieu was content with saying that the principle could be accepted only when it was developed and supported by substantial proofs.[35]

In marshaling evidence to support his theory, De Jussieu also provided defenses of Mes-mer; e.g., "The efficacy of the action of contact and friction is proved by the existence in certain subjects of hypnogenic zones, of which the slightest stimulation produces somnambulism."[36]

After the official reports by the commissions, Mesmer left returned to Austria. Mesmer left France in wariness of the approaching Revolution. Had he remained there as a friend of the

32 Every clinical psychologist knows that with any therapy, some will be cured, some will not.

33 Binet and Fere, 23.

34 *Ibid*., 17.

35 /b/d., 25-26.

36 /b/d. Binet referenced M. Charcot as having shown that the irritation of hysterogenic zones produces convulsions, and these zones are generally seated in the hypchondriac or in the ovarian regions, on which Mesmer preferred to exercise his manipulations.

nobility, he might have lost his head.[37] After some travel, he returned to the city of his birth, where he set up a private practice treating the sick until his death in 1815. He was a colorful figure with a creative and brilliant mind who left his mark on the history of hypnotism. Indeed, he is truly deserving of being known as the father of hypnotherapy.

Mesmer's friends have represented him as a man desirous of fame, but, at the same time, full of love for suffering humanity, and a true physician at heart. It is said that he died with a smile on his lips. And why should he not? He was eighty-one years old--a long life by the standard of his times--he had penetrated some of the secrets of nature, his career had been filled with excitement, he had been a friend of many famous personages, he himself had attained to fame, and he had helped thousands of people regain their health. Most important, Mesmer took fuel from the past, the concepts of many great and advanced thinkers before him, and used them as kindling to spark a fire that would burn for many years to come.

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Vincent ButaneIii, The *Wizard from Vienna* (New York: Coward, McGann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1975), p. 181.

Antecedents Of Mesmerism

Mesmer lived during a period when scientific discoveries were beginning to startle mankind, yet very little was known about how the human body functioned, in health or in sickness. The practice of medicine was more an art than a science. Mesmer was one of the first physicians in the 18th century (also called the Age of Reason) to attempt to systematize his methods of healing. In this, naturally, he was influenced by earlier healers and the medical knowledge of his times.

Mesmer's studies at the Jesuit University of Dillingen included material on astronomy, physics, and mathematics. He admired the work of van Helmont, Fludd, Maxwell, and Paracelsus.[1] Through these fluidists he became acquainted with the theories of magnetism in relation to the practice of medicine. It was at Dillingen that Mesmer was secretly introduced to the writings of Christian Wolff, a Protestant philosopher whose works were strictly forbidden by the Roman Catholic University. Wolff placed great emphasis on the need for scientific truth in all branches of knowledge. He believed that theological doctrines should be capable of rational proof, like mathematics, and that it should therefore be possible to unite Catholic and Protestant. Among his many writings appear two of the earliest works on psychology and an essay on the practical philosophy of the Chinese? Also, Jesuit scholars produced many translations of Chinese books and even carried out astronomical observations in Peking.[3] Therefore, we can assume Mesmer had contact with Chinese medical theory prior to the development of his theories.

Eastern Ancients

Chinese traditional medicine is over 5000 years old, and the practice of acupuncture dates back to 2500 B.C. The *Huang Ti Nei-Ching,* the oldest book on medicine, includes discussions of acupuncture, physiology, pathology, classification of diseases, meridian systems and Chinese philosophy. The philosophical basis of Chinese medicine

is the concept of energy. Good health results from a state of energy balance in the human body; and it is taught that the entire universe

Albert Moll, *Hypnotism* (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., no date), p. 4.

D. M. Walm;ley, *Anton Mesmer,* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1%7), p. 3, 19.
Martin P. Harney, The *Jesuits in History* (New York: The America Press, 1941), pp. 210-211.

works in harmony. In this model, energy (chi) is viewed as the primary component of all physiological activities. The flow of chi in the body moves sequentially from meridian to meridian in a well-defined cycle. Chi is seen as a dynamic force in constant flux, and the flow in the body is governed by the two polar energy forces, the Yin and the Yang. Yin is known as the feminine, cold, dark, and the interior of the body, which is deep and hidden. Yang is masculine, heat, light, active, and the exterior of the body.[4] Water is yin and fire is yang. This dualism exists in all things. Yin and yang are constantly interacting and changing, but one cannot exist without the other, i.e., 'q'he entire universe is an oscillation of forces of yin and yang."[5] Yin and yang are not absolute: each exists relative to the other. Their relativity and inseparability are symbolized by a design showing a portion of each within the other. This concept pervades all the philosophy, religion, literature, medicine and art of China.

In Chinese medicine, illness or disease is reputedly caused by the imbalance in the relative amounts of yin and yang. The acupuncturist determines the energy imbalance by palpation of the client's pulse. Balance is restored by inserting needles into the patient at particular energy points on the meridians and leaving the needles in for fifteen to twenty minutes. When yin and yang are in balance, health and well-being are manifested? The modern practice of acupuncture often incorporates the use of magnets or high voltage electricity on the energy points for the relief of pain, stomach disorders, cold symptoms, etc. The magnets are applied according to north (yin energy) and south (yang energy). The application of yin or yang energy to the meridian and energy points is based on whether sedation or tonification is needed.

While it is strictly conjecture that Mesmer learned Chinese medical theory, the correspondences between the two systems make it very likely that he did incorporate these teachings into his own theories. We can see this influence in Mesmer's most original idea of the ebb and flow within the body. His theory states that when the body is in disharmony with the ebb and flow of the earth, disease results, or energy blockage. When energy flow is reestablished within the earth, the energy flow within the body is also reestablished and the blockage is removed. This, then, is very close to Chinese medical theory which states that the inner energy flow, yin, is in constant flux with the outer energy flow, yang. Harmony and good health are achieved when there is a balance of the energy within the human body with that of the external universe. Ebb

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Beijlng College of Traditional Chinese Medicine *et al., Essentials of Chinese Acupuncture* (Beij-ing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980), pp. 11-12.

/b/d., 16.

/b/d., 14.

and flow, yin and yang, both strive for ultimate balance.

Western Ancients

Ancient poets and historians are steeped in references to trance-induced sleep, prophetic visions and cures. Escuiapius delivered prophecy in dreams for the treatment of his patients, soothed pain by the placing-on-of-hands, and used warm "insuffiations" over injured parts, causing patients to fall into a long and peaceful sleep.[7] The character of Mercury in Plautus' work the "Amphitryon" says with slight sarcasm, "Suppose I caress or magnetize him a little to make him sleep?"--the answer being, "You would be doing me a service; it is now three nights since I have slept.,,[s]

Animal Magnetism (the basic principle of mesmerism), lying in conjunction with human existence, sat as the necessary basis for the otherwise unexplainable events in the lives of ancient people. As wise Celsus said, 'q'he Charlatans performed extraordinary cures by the mere apposition of the hands, and cured patients by blowing."[9]

Indeed, the fact that charlatans could perform cures by laying on of hands is indicative of three things: the ritual surrounding the healing, which led to expectation on the part of the subjects; the desire of the healer to affect change; and the need to be healed, since anyone with the desire to be healed may heal himself. Mesmer incorporated all of these, making the most use of ritual and the intent to produce beneficial change. His healing performances were ritualistic in nature. Ancient mesmeric practices can be traced back thousands of years, as far back as the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, where the process was used as a highly influential tool in healing and religious practices. Scenes of magnetic healing are illustrated in reliefs found in ancient Egyptian temples and monuments.[1°] However, the most conclusive evidence of mesmeric/hypnotic phenomena is depicted on the sarcophagus of a mummy. Here a human figure with open eyes is seen stretched on a bed. On the bed are the symbols of the four Egyptian medical deities--Isis, Osiris, Anubis and Horus. Next to them stands a person wearing the dog-mask of

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/b/d., 14

/b/d.

James Coates,"How to Mesmerise: A Manual of Instruction in the History, Mysteries, Modes of Procedure and Arts of Mesmerism" (London: Hay Nisbet & Co., 1894), p. 1.
L.H. Anderson, *Ancient Magic, Magnetism and Psychic Forces: The Key to Power* (Chicago: The National Institute, 1895), p. 51.

Anubis, in the act of magnetizing, with the left hand positioned on the breast and the right above the patient's head.[TM] Mesmer's system may have incorporated some of these Egyptian rituals involving animal magnetism and physical contact with the intent to produce change. Even his invention of the *baquet* may have been inspired by these early sources.

Hebrews and Early Christians

Spiritual gifts, powers of healing, prophecy and leadership were associated with the laying-on-of-hands by the Hebrews and Assyrians. Often these practices were espoused in the Old Testament, in which ritual and altered states of consciousness played a large part.[12] 'q'he Lord said unto Moses, Take Joshua, the son of Nun, a man on whom is the spirit, and lay thy hands upon him. Set him before the priest and congregation, and ask counsel for him. And he laid his hands upon him as the Lord commanded" (Numbers xxvii.18,23). "And Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands upon him" (Deut. xxxiv. 9.). Hands-on-heal-ing was also practiced by Jesus and his followers. "Many were astonished that such mighty works were wrought by His hands" (Mark vi. 2). "Lay hands upon the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark xvi. 18). However, modern science says that the Jews cured by "imagination" or "suggestion," whereas the healings of Christ and the apostles are seen as having no "occult basis" other than in the theory of the "operator" and the "expectancy" of the subject. Christ healed many people in this way but also commanded His disciples to heal as He did, thereby making healing an act of faith rather than divine power.[13] Moreover, the fact that the Bible so widely acknowledges the use of this proto-mesmerism and the laying on of hands seems to show that there was a religious basis for it and that in this basis lies its credibility. However, the conclusion that Jesus ever consciously used "magnetic agencies" seems unlikely, though the analogy is still very apparent. Whatever Jesus and his followers used, it contributed to the idea of the human body as possessing powers beyond the seemingly normal capabilities.[14]

Since Mesmer received his undergraduate degree in philosophy, at that time a much more eclectic discipline than in the present, it is likely that he studied ancient religions, history, and literature. All religions, all ritual used altered states of consciousness and were intuitive by nature.

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M. Ormonde, "History of Hypnotism" (Edinburgh: By the author, 1891), p. 74. Coates, 2.
Ibid., 3.
Ormonde, 75-76.

The Fluidists

Placing-on-of-hands may have been accepted by the fluidists of the day, of whom Mesmer was definitely one. Celsus was the first fluidist of his time and greatly affected those who came after him. He performed cures on Egyptian royalty and saw the power as a liquid oozing from the whole surface of the body, thereby enabling manipulation by another person?[5] Magnetic energy seen in so concrete a way undoubtedly made these healings widely accepted by the practitioner as well as the patient, although many who cured could not explain it. Readings in Celsus would surely have inspired Mesmer with confidence in the innate power to heal, as well as informing him of the importance of the physician's intent for change.

The Greeks

In the surviving shards of ancient Greek thought Mesmer found the first stirrings of the scientific method, and of speculation about the nature of the universe, and man and woman's proper place and function in it. Most of the beginning fluidists saw the human body in terms of energy flow. The first Greek philosopher to suggest a differentiation between the spiritual and the material elements in man, animals and plants is believed to be Anaxagoras (ca. 500-428 B.C.). Yet it was Democritus (ca. 460-370 B.C.) who taught that the entire universe, including man, was made of the same matter; that this matter was composed of small, fundamental particles; and that their motions and formations produced what the senses perceive as individual qualities. To these tiny particles he applied the term *atom,* meaning 'that which is indivisible."

Hippocrates (ca. 460-377 B.C.) had the wisdom to recognize that the cause of disease was not supernatural agencies, but natural processes.[16] His doctrine of health for his patients required moderation in all things. He spoke of the notion of crisis first and cure directly afterward,[I?] which was one of the tenets of Mesmer's therapy. It was Aristotle (ca. 382-322 B.C.) who postulated that the soul was the vital principle of the body, and that body and soul were substantially united, so that one could not be treated without treating the other. Aristotle, like Mesmer, focused on wholeness and balance in his teachings. Even Euclid (ca. 330-275 B.C.) and Archimedes (ca. 287-212 B.C.) contributed ideas that had an effect on the physicians who were a prelude to Mesmer.

15Ibid.

16Dagobert D. Runes (ed.), *A Treasury of World Science* (Paterson: Littlefield, Adamq & Co., 1962), p.485.

17 /b/d, 489-490.

Early Physicians

For centuries the field of medicine lay under the sway of the works of Galen (ca. 130-201), and Mesmer certainly could not be immune to his influence. Galen, a Greek physician who was a disciple of Hippocrates, has become known as the father of modern medicine. In addition to treating patients, he pioneered in practical anatomical and physiological researches, in order to advance diagnostic techniques but also to demonstrate, in the marvelous mechanisms of the body, the profundity of the creator god.m Galen's physiological system was an adaptation of Hippocrates' theory of humors: the four elements--hot, cold, wet, and dry--were combined in the body, and health depended upon the maintenance of a proper proportion between them. An imbalance of any element produced disease, when in combination with harmful exterior factors. Galen also believed that the spirit existed throughout the body, interpenetrated with the humors. Medicines, too, had within them the properties of the four elements, and cures could be effected by means of opposites: a drug with a preponderance of the "cold" quality relieved a disease caused by an abundance of the "hot". Galen, like Mesmer, concentrated on balance of energy flow, fluidism and the humors of the body, all of which are in line with Chinese medical theory. Undoubtedly, Mesmer received from Galen a large part of his view of altered states of consciousness, ritual and intuitive processes, which played a central role in Mesmer's philosophy and therapeutic system. Moreover, in direct parallel to the fate of Mesmer, Galen, who has been termed the Prince of Physicians, was accused of sorcery by his contemporaries because of their envy at his unequalled success. Mesmer, too, was to learn that it is not wise to incur the jealousy of one's colleagues.

European Theorists

John Dee (1527-1608), mathematician and occultist, held the view that every thing and place in the world radiated a 'lorce" that influenced all the other parts. His work was decidedly mystical, and he maintained that these invisible influences in nature could be sensed through spiritual development and the cultivation of one's psychic gifts. Dee's philosophy served as an important foundation of the Rosicrucian Movement? He attempted to synthesize the then-current mystical traditions with Galenic traditions and use intuitive powers to promote his own psychic awareness.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) may also be considered a part of the chain leading to mes-

18 /b/d., 318.

19 Jeffrey Mishlove, The *Roots of Consciousness: Psychic Liberation through History, Science and Experience* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1975), p. 46.

merism, since he wrote of experiments demonstrating the release of "immateriate virtues" from the minds and spirits of men, either by affection or imagination. To a certain extent he seems to have anticipated Mesmer's discovery, since he says that "light effiuxions" exist from spirit to spirit, as well as from body to body, when two people are in the same room. In addition, Bacon's clas-siftcation of science had as its point of departure the faculties of the soul--namely, memory (history), imagination (poetry) and intellect (philosophy).[2°] Bacon, therefore, saw the universe as consisting of spiritual as well as physical entities, thereby affording validation to Mesmer's use of intuitive processes to produce overt effects.

The astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) in 1610 turned his attention to the study of astrology in relation to his medical practice and attempted to associate the influence of the planets with human diseases. His writings describe the similarities between planetary aspects and musical consonance, and he felt that all bodily fluids waxed and waned with the moon. He further developed his theories by delving into man's past, and relating it to his mathematical calculations of planetary motions.[21]

Again we see direct correlations of Mesmer's theory of wholeness and balance in Kepler's philosophies, though Kepler was more methodical in practice. Kepler's theories that fluids waxed and waned with the moon, and that music too affected bodily fluids, appeared with very little change in Mesmer's teachings.

Jan Baptista Van Helmont (1578-1644) was well acquainted with the doctrines of Galen. However, as did Paracelsus, Van Helmont rejected most of them. Instead, he borrowed constructive ideas from Paracelsus and devised his own medical system by applying new chemical techniques to the preparation of drugs. In addition to Paracelsus, van Helmont was influenced by the work of Kepler and Dee. Van Helmont said, "Magnetism is active everywhere, and has nothing new but the name: it is a paradox only to those who ridicule everything and who attribute to Satan whatever they are themselves unable to explain."[22]

In the seventeenth century psychology changed from being the study of the soul to the study of the mind and its functions. This was in large part due to Descartes. Ren Descartes (1596-1650) was a philosopher, mathematician and natural scientist. He rejected the emphasis

20 Henry Misiak and Vir~nia Standt Sexton, *History of Psychology: An Overview* (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1966), p. 9.

21 Mishlove, 47.

22H.S. Drayton, *Human Magnetism: Its Nature, Physiology and Psychology* (New York: Fowler & Wells, Co., 1889), p. 9.

on philosophical analysis from past systems and created a system based solely on observation and deduction. Psychology, for him, did not involve people, but the spiritual mind and its contents. For Descartes, the mind was made up only of conscious states, and knowledge was possible because humans have within them "innate" ideas. These ideas, are "intuitive knowledge of principles, or inclinations and potentialities which the soul possesses for knowing things." Innate ideas exist in everyone's mind, irrespective of experience, and are put there by God, the "Creator" of the soul. Descartes equated mind with soul and believed environmental stimulus to be secondary to this knowledge. The question whether we are born a "blank slate" at birth, or have inherited knowledge, divided psychologists in the late nineteenth century into "nativists" and "empiricists," nativists believing all experience is innate, and empiricists believing all experience is learned.

Descartes' philosophy is really a twofold system, consisting of both the spiritualistic and materialistic. These two opposing ideas became the basis for two different philosophical theories, the idealistic and the mechanistic. This dualism, called Cartesian dualism, holds the body and mind as separate entities, contrasted with "monism" which views human beings as either solely a physical presence or solely a spiritual entity. Descartes saw the soul and the body as directly acting on one another, which he called the "doctrine of interaction", a theory seen in most of the healing arts of the twentieth century.[23]

Descartes, like Van Helmont, focused on wholeness and balance. He systematized scientific theory; and perhaps influenced by Descartes, Mesmer began his own systematizing of different methods. Descartes could very well have been a factor in the development of Mesmer's twenty-seven propositions. Moreover, Descartes concentrated on spiritualism and materialism equivalent to the yin and yang, which became predominant in Mesmer's concepts of ebb and flow, and fluids reacting to planetary influences.

Of all the historical figures in medicine who influenced Mesmer, Paracelsus appears to stand in the forefront. Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (14937-1541), who called himself Paracelsus (after Celsus, the physician and mathematician), became a physician of prominence and revolutionized the medical ideas of the 16th century. He upset tradition by displacing the roots, herbs, and plant tinctures of the accepted Galenic school, generally substituting the use of minerals such as iron, mercury, and sulphur, which he saw as having the properties of mag-

23 Misiak and Sexton, pp. 11-13.

netism.[24] He believed that these magnetic energies had the power to heal, and that this inner power was derived from the heavenly bodies.

Paracelsus' view of the universe was wholistic, embracing the grand pattern of microcosm and macrocosm. Today he is regarded as the first true medical scientist and as a precursor of psychology, microchemistry, antisepsis, and homeopathy.[25] He was both a man of science and a mystic, mixing into his medical practice ideas of astrology and astronomy, alchemy and chemistry. All of this combined in his doctrine to prove it was the magnetic properties inherent in nature (as manifested in magnets) that held the secret of curing the diseases of man.

He believed that magnets, when passed over diseased organs, produced a cure by means of the magnetic energy flowing from the planets through the lodestone and into the patient's body. Accordingly, he came to see the position of the planets as important in formulating his treatments. The brain, he said, was ruled by the Moon, the spleen responded to Saturn, the kidneys to Venus, the liver to Jupiter, and the bile to Mars.

However, his creative virtues were more than counterbalanced by the fact that he was fat, bald, vulgar, and bad-tempered, as well as a showman and a braggart.[26] What opinion Mesmer held of him, and to what degree he emulated him in medical practice (though not in the above qualities) is unknown, since he did not mention Paracelsus directly in his writings. Yet it is safe to say that Paracelsus influenced Mesmer greatly. Both Mesmer and Paracelsus saw the mental capacities interconnected with the physical. His emphasis on influence of heavenly bodies on the human body, the need for a crisis state, intuitive processes, altered states of consciousness, ritual, wholeness and balance parallel Mesmer's ideas. Like Mesmer, Paracelsus was non-directive as a therapist, and he believed in animal magnetism and magnetic healing. An examination of Paracelsus' life demonstrates that Mesmer really did not come up with new ideas, but merely packaged old ones in a completely new way.

Mesmer did mention Isaac Newton (1642-1727) many times, praising him for his work and justifying his own thought through Newton's. Newton became a most controversial figure to his peers: William Blake saw him as a major figure responsible for the eighteenth century's enthronement of reason, while Lord Keynes insisted that Newton was one of the last of the magi.

24 Runes, 785.

25 Mishlove, 45.

26James Wyckoff, *Franz Anton Mesmer. Between God and Devil* (Glendale: Westwood Publishlng Co., 1975), p. 5.

Some historians tried to suppress the fact of Newton's obviously occult nature, but his magical and Hermetic interests are evident? Newton himself aided in this suppression, since he realized the dangerous social, political, economic, and religious implications of his true thoughts, were he to dare to reveal them.

However, despite Newton's caution, his occult theories did become known through the writings of one of his closest friends, Richard Mead (1673-1754), one of the most accomplished and socially successful physicians of modern times. Mead's treatise, *The Power of the Sun and Moon Over Human Bodies* (1704) was quoted and referred to by Mesmer.[28] This work, inspired by Newton's discoveries, was an attempt to ascribe human illnesses to the influence of atmospheric pressure and other cosmic causes.

After Newton's death, various associates kept his ideas alive, such as his duality-of-life concept. Friedrich Hoffmann, M.D. (1660-1742) advanced a system that attempted to reconcile the opposing spiritualistic and materialistic views of nature. It has been said that Hoffmann's ideas were much influenced by the work of Leibnitz and Newton. His concept of life bore a close resemblance to Mesmer's theory of animal magnetism. He saw life as dependent upon a universally diffused ether, which organisms breathe in from the atmosphere, and which is retained in all parts of the body. Hoffmann asserted that this ether accumulates in the brain and there generates a "nervous fluid" which permeates the human organism. He called this fluid "pneuma" and developed a theory around it similar to Mead's hypotheses about a "nervous liquor."

George Ernest Stahl (1660-1734) was a colleague of Hoffmann's who also constructed a complete theoretical system of universal energy. He believed that the lives of animals were controlled by the mechanical laws of the universe. Man, however, was different, being possessed of a soul and therefore partaking more of a divine nature. According to Stahl, the symptoms of diseases were efforts of the human soul to rid itself of morbid influences, the soul moving toward the end of self-preservation. Stahl superimposed the notion of wholeness and balance on his view of the body, like Mesmer, by seeing the soul and the physical presence as one.

The now unjustly obscure Roger Boscovitch (1711-1787), once considered one of the

27 Mishlove, 54.

28 Franz Anton Mesmer, *Mesmerism,* trans. George J. Bioch (Los Altos: William Kaufmann, Inc., 1980), p. 17.

greatest scholar-scientists of his era, entered the Jesuit order in 1728.During his lifetime he produced sixty-six treatises on astronomy, pure mathematics and speculative science.[29] In 1758 he published his *Theory of Natural Philosophy* in Vienna. Mesmer was in Vienna as a law student in 1759 and could hardly have failed to notice a work that attracted such great attention. Bos-covitch proposed a unitary theory of the universe, a single general and unique equation governing mechanics, physics, chemistry, biology, and even psychology.[3°] According to his theory, matter, time, and space are not infinitely divisible, but composed of points, or grains. He accounted for light, magnetism, electricity and all the chemical phenomena known at the time. For him, the four elements--earth, water, fire, and air--are only distinguishable by the particular arrangement of the massless and weightless particles of which they are composed. His ideas anticipated today's advanced thinking on unified field theory.[31] Running through his many writings is a concept of universal interaction closely related to Mesmer's idea of a universal fluid. Bos-covitch too saw the body and external world as a whole, with chemical/energy phenomena or "animal magnetism" existing throughout.

It is evident that the postulates of a universal fluid and action at a distance by one human being upon another do not belong to any single man, but are the incorporation of ideas from many. Mesmer's notion of the *baquet* is an accumulation of many past theories; including energy accumulation, ritual, altered states, intuitive processes, physical contact, crisis behavior, focus on wholeness and balance, non-directive intervention, animal magnetism and magnetic healing. Each investigator added to the total by his independent researches and theorizing, yet each overlapped upon the others. Mesmer, then, did not originate these constructs, or the idea of magnetic energy flow. Indeed, he began his work via the practice of others, treating patients with iron magnets. However, he soon found that he could effect the same cures without them. The originality of his approach lay in his application of presumed universal laws of magnetism to the healing of the sick through the personal intervention of the therapist, by means of hand contact and passes over the body.

No doubt Mesmer's timing also made him famous. The need for new fads by the upper class in eighteenth-century Paris gave Mesmer the perfect circumstances to market his talents. Mesmer incorporated others' ideas; yet he was so successful because he was one of the first to sell them in a new and unique way.

29 Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels, The *Morning of the Magicians* (New York: Stein and Day, **1964), p. 262.**

30 /b/d.

31 /b/d., 262-263.

We may say, then, that Mesmer was, at one and the same time, both a great innovator and a rediscoverer, a borrower. This sounds paradoxical but is not, for eclecticism is the root of achievement: a discovery unconnected with the continuity of human experience would be useless and meaningless. If, as Socrates supposedly maintained, all knowledge pre-exists, and learning is merely the bringing forward to awareness of what is already in the mind, then innovation consists of perceiving in a new light what has always been there for anyone to grasp. Though many had plunged into the mysteries of magnetism, Mesmer saw clearer than anyone before. By building upon the foundation laid by his predecessors, Mesmer erected a new, intricate, and beautiful edifice of magnetic theory and therapy.

Chapter Three: Mesmer's philosophies.
The Influences of Mesmer In Other Fields
35

is unaware of this deceptive and dangerous procedure, they think it is "instantaneous hypnosis." To be sure, this illustrates the intermixing of the magician/performer and the healer seen in Mes-mer and Dr. Ormonde, albeit taken to a much more disquieting and unethical level.[28]

Dr. Ormonde "differentiated" between hypnotism and mesmerism by saying they are the same thing, except that the word mesmerism is '¥ulgar and cranky," and the term hypnotism, "proper and scientific."[29] Hypnotism, discovered by Dr. Braid of Manchester to explain "mesmeric and psychical phenomena," according to Ormonde, refers "properly and solely to the artificial production of sleep, the process being one of self magnetization, which may be tested by any person for himself." Mesmerism, however, or as Ormonde called it, '~Nill force," has a much broader definition and extends to "all the phenomena (of which hypnotism is only one phase) of artificial sleep, insensibility to pain, clairvoyance, trance, thought-reading...explaining much that is obscure in so-called Theosophy or Spiritualism."[3°] Although Ormonde condemned the connotations the word "mesmerism" has taken on, he recognizes Mesmer's role as the founder of this science and the injustice of referring to his discoveries under a different name. Yet Ormonde realized that the term "hypnotism" encompasses a wider spectrum than Mesmer's "animal magnetism" and should be addressed accordingly. As Ormonde said, "Mesmer himself would probably be astonished at the development to which his doctrines have now attained.'[31] Ormonde not only used hypnosis as part of his act, but was convinced of its therapeutic benefits as well. He wrote that any habits could be created or broken through daily hypnotic suggestion. "Headaches, or in fact almost any mild pain or discomfort, will readily yield to its influence by repeated suggestion, day after day...There is almost no limit to its application."[32] Like de Puysegur, Ormonde believed the prerequisites for hypnotizing a beginner were "gentleness, will, patience and perseverance," thereby emphasizing the psychological expectations in the subject rather than the physical influences.[33]

In retrospect we can see that Mesmer affected many therapeutic concepts directly following him, from Braid's simple experiments of fixed gazing to Dr. Ormonde's elaborate performances. Let us now explore, in Chapter Four, modern-day therapists and how they were affected by

28 From lecture and demonstration by Gil Boyne, 1976.

29 Omonde, "Mystery Unveiled," 14.

30 *Ibid*.

31 IbM.

32 IbM., 16.

33 IbM., 22.

Ormonde's performances kept his audience spellbound. He writes, 'fi.he members of the Theosophical Society were struck dumb with astonishment at seeing 'another Richard in the field,' and all produced on the open stage without any apparatus or any pretensions to supernatural agency."[24] Apparently, Ormonde's audiences believed he was conjuring images with his magic powers instead of with correctly placed mirrors.

Dr. Ormonde stated at the close of *History of Hypnotism* that many fraudulent hypnotists exist who "pierce and torture" their subjects with sharp objects, sew their lips together with thread, and trample on their bodies when stretched between two chairs. Ormonde, however, performed the similar tests on non-hypnotized people and achieved the same pain-free results.[25] How credible, then, can we assume Ormonde's treatments were, if he resorted to the same barbaric showmanship as the people he condemned? Though Ormonde criticized that which he practiced, namely the hypnotists' flamboyant exhibitionism, he was all too aware of its effect on the medical community and the general public as a whole. Ormonde readily admitted that the public is gullible about the atrocities committed on stage; but when it comes to the real, therapeutic value of hypnotism, the public becomes quickly sceptical. Ormonde went so far as to say that the medical community should investigate the charlatans, so that true science could be applied.[26]

How could Ormande, then, make his living by sensationalizing mesmerism, instead of legitimizing it? Because the former is what sells. Dr. Ormonde believed wholeheartedly in the healing powers of mesmerism, and he used entertainment as the only means available to him to get the message across. Thus we see the progression mesmerism underwent from being solely a healing practice in ancient times to being an entertainment form today.[27] Many hypnotists of the time gave "pure" mesmerist demonstrations, employing only hypnotic suggestion; but many others used techniques of stage magic and trickery in order to get the results they wanted. The practice continues today: the hypnotist Gil Boyne, e.g., resorts to knocking out volunteers with his forearm if they refuse to "sleep." The subjects then awaken on the floor and are quietly informed that if they do not do as they are told they will receive more or worse. Since the audience

24 /b/d.

25 Ormonde, "History of Hypnotism," 84.

26 Ibid.

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religion did not change people's beliefs, but simply gave them a new way to look at them, a way 't0 maintain faith in ourselves, our ideals, and our covenant with God even while they compel us to reinterpret that covenant in light of new experience."[19]

Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church, was a magnetic healer who used hands-on therapy and great manual force in his healings. Smith's successful cures convinced many that he was divinely inspired, thus bringing in numerous converts and adding to the evangelical character of his sect.

The science of mesmerism and the art of performance began to come to a head with Dr. Ormonde in the late 1800s. Ormonde was a mesmerist, hypnotist, thought reader and magician who wrote several books on the history of mesmerism.[2°]

Ormonde hoped to convince the world of the therapeutic nature of hypnotism. He wrote, "it is singular that a thing which presents itself to men so completely devoid of mysticism, and which at the same time offers such magnificent rewards, should be so neglected. There can be little doubt that Hypnotism would have made much greater advances in public estimation, had it been properly applied, and its practice entirely confined to the alleviation of pain, and therapeutics in general."[21] This is said by a man who couched his cures in sensational magical performance for the entertainment of his audience. One of his advertisements read: "Prestidigitation; Ventriloquism; Lightning Sketches; Hypnotism; Psychognosis. Two hours' continual enjoyment and profitable pleasure. Every incident differing from the rest, and brimful of genuine interest, being specially designed to REFINE, INSTRUCT, and AMUSE.- ..... Dr. Ormonde also gives

Private Instructions in Hypnotism and Private Drawingroom Demonstrations by special arrangement.,,[22]

Madame Blavatsky, Colonel Olcott and other members of the Theosophical Society performed at the Grant Road Theatre in Bombay at the same time as Dr. Ormonde. The demand for Dr. Ormonde's performances at the theater was so great that he had to arrange "extra special performances," and even then the theater was not big enough to accommodate the crowds.[23]

19 William McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings and Reform* (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 2, quoted in Fuller, *Mesmerism...*, p. 75.

20 Ormonde, "History of Hypnotism," ii.

21 /b/d., 76.

22 /b/cl., iii.

23 Ormonde, "Mystery Unveiled," 11.

Hypnotism, on the other hand, is a directive therapy of suggestion which depends in procedure far less upon intuition than upon fairly standardized verbal patterns of investigation and guidance. However, the therapist may intuit the most effective procedure for a given patient, and the goal remains intuitive--that is, insight or behavior modification achieved through direct experience in the hypnotic state rather than through rational analysis, though the latter may also play a part.

One final point of difference is that though both methods depend for their effectiveness upon engaging and harnessing the power of the unconscious mind, Mesmer believed that "A disease cannot be cured without a crisis...to disperse the obstacles which impede circulation....thus reestablishing harmony and equilibrium within all parts of the body." These crises could be anything from hysteria or seizures to "¥omiting, movement of the bowels, sweating, urinating, hemorrhagic flow, etc.."[12] While hypnosis may be used to produce a crisis state, cures are more often attempted through gradual and gentle reeducation of the unconscious mind to accept new ideas and models, through repeated suggestion. However, the difference is not as great as it seems, for Mesmer also observed that there are "less evident crises....in which the natural constitution acts insensibly, without violence, by slowly breaking down the obstacles which constrict the circulation, and drives them away through insensible processes".[13]

Mesmer's demeanor and appearance were very much that of a magician and performer. Likewise, his students carried on in the same direction. The very act of demonstrating what mesmerism could do attracted magicians, performers, jugglers, clock-makers, bakers. To be sure, many people changed their life direction after seeing a good mesmeric performance.

After Mesmer taught his first groups of students, arguments arose, because Mesmer did not want anyone to do anything with "animal magnetism" until he gave permission, which he never gave? His students, of course, did as they chose. They became eclectic, as Mesmer himself was: each took what he/she liked and disregarded the rest, all the while calling what they did "mesmerism."

In the nineteenth century, Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Olcott stated that mes-

12
Jerome Eden, *Maxims on Animal Magnetism,* 1958, quoted in Jerome Eden, *Animal Magnetism and the Life Energy,* pp. 49-50.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Darnton, 51-52.

merism was compatible with 'q'heosophical" teachings. In Blavatsky's book, *Isis Unveiled,* she distinguishes between two kinds of magnetization: the "purely animal" and the 'transcendent (which depends) on the will and knowledge of the mesmerizer, as well as on the degree of spirituality of the subject."[15] The importance of the mesmerizer as performer and healer helped reestablish a ritualistic form which could be rehearsed, practiced and repeated.

The transformation mesmerism underwent, from being a psychological doctrine to being a basis for popular religion, was due to people's willingness to explore new understandings of themselves in relation to God. Whitney Cross says, "Mesmerism led to Swedenborgianism, and Swedenborgianism to spiritualism, not because of the degree of intrinsic relationship between their propositions but because of the assumptions according to which their American adherents understood them."[16]

Mesmerism offered George Bush and other Swedenborgians clear evidence on the legitimacy of their own claims: 'q'hey speak as if, to their own consciousness, they had undergone an inward translation by which they had passed out of a material into a spiritual body...The state into which a subject is brought by the mesmerizing process is a state in which the spirit predominates for the time being over the body."[17]

The pluralistic evolution of mesmeric thinking was of crucial importance to Swedenborgianism's attempt to bring Americans into a "new view of the interior genius of the inspired word, and of the whole body of Christian doctrine.",[is] Thus we see mesmerism as clearly laying the foundation for religiously-based belief systems to emerge.

Mesmerism's latent spiritualism became even more emphasized with the rising popularity of revival campaigns. Mesmerism arrived in America just as religion was being freed from strict Calvinist roots and being brought to an emotional, personal level. Mesmerism as a component of

15 H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* (London: The Theosophical Society, 1877), p. 178, quoted in Robert Fuller, *Mesmerism and the American Cure of Souls* (Philadelphia:University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p. 72.

16 Whitney R. Cross, The *Bumed-Over District* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), p. 342, quoted in Fuller, *Mesmerism and the American Cure...,* p. 73.

17 George Bush, *Mesmer & Swedenborg* (New York: John Allen, 1847), p. 160, quoted in Fuller, *Mesmerism and the American Cure..., p. 58.*

18 Bush, *Mesmer & Swedenborg,* p. xii, quoted in Fuller, *Mesmerism..., p. 60.*

being that each thought or emotion produces within the brain an energy discharge that is transmitted to the body on a subliminal level, through the autonomic nervous system. It has been well publicized that most physicians nowadays believe the great majority of the diseases they treat are of psychosomatic origin?

Hypnotism and mesmerism share a certain dependence on ritual as a means of concentrating the attention of the subject and impressing upon him that something important and effective is taking place. Hypnotic induction procedures may make use of candles, pendulums, crystal balls, and other objects of focus; hand passes in front of the subject's eyes are often employed; and the verbal portion of the method usually involves leading the subject on a series of steps into deeper relaxation and concentration through directed imagination. For example, the subject may be asked to picture a carpeted stairway that he will descend into a warm, comfortable room, or to imagine himself/herself walking off into a flowery meadow. The subject is led to believe that she/he is, in effect, going somewhere else, into a special state where the rules of everyday life may not apply, so that extraordinary things may happen--even something as extraordinary as giving up smoking.

Mesmer made great use of candles, incense, music, robes, draperies, mirrors, and iron or glass rods, which he in apparent sincerity believed would enhance and focus the universal fluid.[1°] In fact, he produced a highly impressive, quasi-religious rite, creating an atmosphere of power and mystery--though he himself seems to have remained a gentle, kind man interested principally in his researches, a dedicated healer who often treated the poor without charge. Since religious ceremonies throughout history have proved so effective in producing ecstatic experiences, it is little wonder that Mesmer was able to achieve many "miraculous" cures.

Where hypnotism and mesmerism diverge, apart from theory, is in the role of the therapist. Mesmer seems to have given no suggestion at all, but instead depended on physical contact, or near-contact, moving his hands on or close to the patient's body, or touching the affected part, in the attempt, first, to find areas of blockage of the universal fluid, and second, to pass healing animal magnetism into the patient. It was, then, an almost totally intuitive process, especially since Mesmer had determined that 'the cause of the malady and pain....in the majority of illnesses resides in the side opposite to the pain."~ It was also intuitive for the patient, who received no overt clues from Mesmer as to what sort of behavior was expected.

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Bill Gottlieb, "*Pain Relief That Starts in the Mina*[v] (Prevention Magazine, March 1979 p. 95) Darnton, 8.
Eden, 43.

magnetism theory--that an emanation from the mesmerist produced the effects he saw. He surmised that the process was purely physiological, generated by the subject's own nervous system. "Fixed gazing" he said, "produces the phenomena of paralyzing the nerve centers of the eyes and their dependent areas by destroying the balance of the nervous system."[5] And so, to him goes the credit of being the first to prove, by producing trance merely by having subjects focus their eyes on a point, that the hypnotic state did not require the personal intervention of a hypnotist, or the action of an imperceptible fluid.

Mesmerism is equated with hypnotism in many source materials. The confusion appears to have arisen from the fact that the two processes overlap intimately in therapeutic intent; yet they are divergent,[s] The hypnotic state is produced through what may be termed a psychological, and usually verbal, methodology, while mesmerism is more physiologically oriented and, in its original form, substantively non-verbal.[7] And both therapies may be described as rituals for change.

The original commissions that investigated and discredited Mesmer's claims declared that animal magnetism was non-existent, and that any reported cures were "due to imagination and contact."[s] What the commissions overlooked (though it had been discovered over and over again since ancient times) was the mind-body interaction, in which the state of one affects the other. Indeed, any psychotherapy would probably be ineffective if the patient were unable to imagine that the process could effect a cure (desire, belief, and expectation are always crucial). Also, the state of scientific knowledge at the time may not have been advanced enough to allow of viewing all human behavior as an energy phenomenon, which, with or without the existence of a universal fluid, may be enhanced, diminished, or channeled by an appropriate therapy, or, to put it another way, through contact with an authority figure (the therapist) in a situation of expectation of change.

Mesmerism may be looked upon as a process which brings two factors into play simultaneously: the effect of body on mind and mind on body, each augmenting the other. In this view, a psychological process can be considered to be also a physiological process, the theory

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Moll, 12-13.
Jerome Eden, *Animal Magnetism and the Life Energy* (Hicksville, New York: Exposition Press, 1974), p. 21.

Anderson, 52.
Eden, 14.

The Influences Of Mesmer In Other Fields

Beginning with the Marquis de Puysegur, we see Mesmer's influence begin to move beyond his lifetime. De Puysegur, a student of Mesmer, was the pioneer who shifted magnetic healing's causality from a physical influence to a psychological one. His views differed slightly from Mesmer's: he believed that electrical energy made up all space and all 'animate' beings, and that this force could be controlled by the mind. "Clairvoyance and somnambulism", then, could theoretically be developed in anyone. This clairvoyant sense did not function in everyday consciousness, but only when a person was being magnetized.

De Puysegur concentrated on the non-verbal relationship between patient and healer instead of the existence of actual fluid, saying "animal magnetism lies not in the action of one body upon another, but in the action of the thought upon the vital principle of the body."[1] He also proposed that a patient's "suggestibility, will and prior expectations" were important factors in his/her openness to a hypnotist's suggestion.[2] De Puysegur's motto was, "Be willing and believe."[3] Here De Puysegur lays the foundation for hypnosis as we know it today.

Yet mesmerism in Europe was relatively short-lived, being too physically-based a system in a philosophically-oriented society. As Fuller says, "Mesmerism never produced the proper credentials to achieve enduring status within any of the three (political, medical, and religious spheres of life). Nor was it able to secure for itself a cultural niche by totally blurring the distinctions between them as it was later to do in America. Apparently, Europe lacked a crisis for which animal magnetism was an appropriate cure."[4]

Dr. James Braid, the Scottish surgeon who coined the word "hypnotism," witnessed demonstrations by a French mesmerist in 1841. At first he assumed it was all a hoax, but eventually he began to accept the reality of the process. However, he did not believe in the animal

H.P. Blavatsky, The Theosophical Glossary (London: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1892), p. 199.

Robert C. Fuller, *Mesmerism and the American Cure of* Souls (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982).
Jean Dauven, The *Powers of Hypnosis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1969), pp. 45-46.

Fuller, 14-15.

Mesmer's Influence On Modern Therapies

Freud As Hypnotist

As Nathan Adler states, mesmerism had "long-term consequences for the development of...the work of Charcot and Freud."[1] Hypnotism grew out of mesmerism; and if Sigmund Freud had not gone to study with the great neurologist and hypnotist Jean-Martin Charcot at the S,~lp6tri6re hospital in Paris, it is at least possible that his interest in neurologic pathology would have continued to dominate his career.

Charcot had created a sensation with his studies of hysteria and his experiments with hypnotism. A paper he delivered on the subject "brought about a complete reversal within France of the negative attitude in official science toward mesmerism or 'animal magnetism'? Though Charcot himself was oriented toward a physical basis for mental maladies and for the phenomenon of hypnotism, his production of hysterical symptoms in nonhysterical patients through hypnotic suggestion showed that physical symptoms could be due to mental functions alone. "It was under Charcot, therefore, that Freud was able to glimpse a new link between mental cause and physical effect."[3] This was the pivotal point of his turn away from neurophysiology toward the "purely psychological modes of thought?

Freud returned to Vienna an enthusiastic supporter of hypnotism, which made him many enemies among the medically orthodox. At first, he used Charcot's method of symptom suppression through direct suggestion, along with electrotherapy, massage, and other standard methods for the treatment of hysteria. Then from his associate Josef Breuer he adopted the

"cathartic technique" of having the patient recall, under hypnosis, each incident of manifestation of a symptom, until the original event that caused it was arrived at, resulting in disappearance of the symptom,[5]

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Nathan Adler,"Social and Historical Determinants of Psychotherapeutic Systems," *Counseling and Psychotherapy: Classics on Theories and Issues.* ed. Ben N. Ard, Jr. (Palo Alto: Science of Behavior Books, 1975), p. 249.

Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 30.

Ronald W. Clark, *Freud, the Man and the Cause* (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 134. Sulloway, 49.
Clark, 99.

Before long, though, Freud experienced difficulties with hypnotism: he was unable to hypnotize some patients; others could not be brought to the state of deep hypnosis necessary for catharsis. In an attempt to improve his technique, Freud went to Nancy to observe the methods of the highly acclaimed hypnotists, Bernheim and Liebeault. Bernheim, unlike Charcot, held an "ideogenic" theory of hypnosis which attributed the hypnotic process and its effects purely to suggestion.[6] From him Freud learned a technique of commanding a patient with hypnotically produced amnesia to remember, while the therapist applied hand pressure to the forehead (reminiscent of Mesmerism), to "help the patient tap the forgotten state of consciousness. Freud therefore surmised that his own unhypnotizable patients also knew the seemingly forgotten traumas...and he resolved to extract this information without hypnosis." He finally found the mesmeric "laying on of hands" unnecessary, and simply let the patient talk about whatever occurred to him or her.[7] Thus began the technique of free association, and the beginnings of psychoanalysis. Freud had removed himself from the sphere of mesmeric technique (ritual, physical contact, intervention, etc.)

There was also an overt event that led to his final abandonment of hypnotism. "While one of his patients was undergoing the cathartic treatment, on waking she suddenly embraced Freud." He says that he had now grasped 'the mysterious element that was at work behind hypnotism." It suffices to note that Freud had unwittingly encouraged the "magnetic passion" of the old mesmerists.[8] The "mysterious element" was, of course, sexual attraction.

Though he often criticized hypnotism after discarding it, in part on the grounds that it was a cumbersome method, and that symptoms removed by suggestion often returned or were replaced by others, some appreciation of its potential must have remained, for in 1918, commenting on the use of hypnotism in treating shell-shock, he said, "1 myself would reach back for the hypnotic method if faced with similar case material and for certain psychoses?

Freud was not an especially good hypnotist, lacking the charisma and authority of a Char-cot, who could often produce a deep trance state in a patient by a single command. Had he been highly proficient, he probably would have continued some regular use of the technique, and though he undoubtedly still would have developed his psychoanalytic theories, their application

SuUoway, 46.

/bM., 73-74.8

A. R. G. Owen, *Hysteria, Hypnosis and Healing:. The Work of J. M. Charcot* (New York: Gar-rett Publications, **1971), p. 205.**

Clark, 387.

would necessarily have been far different.

Homeopathy

Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843),[1°] the founder of homeopathy, credited many who came before him--from Hippocrates to Mesmer--with the concept of similars ("like cures like"), but it was he who systematized it into a methododology of medical treatment based on the theory that diseases can be treated by giving small doses of chemical compounds that in a healthy person would produce symptoms like those of the disease.

There are many correspondences between Mesmer's and Hahnemann's views and techniques. Both believed in the necessity of inducing a "crisis," as Mesmer termed it; Hahnemann's phrase for the process was 'therapeutic aggravation."[11] Mesmer utilized his own "animal magnetism" vibrations to dissipate energy blockages in his patients. Hahnemann said that each sub-stance--plant, metal, flower, etc.-- has its own rate of magnetic vibration (as in nuclear magnetic resonance technology), and it is possible to extract the essence of this vibration. Diseases set up disharmonious vibrations in the body; but when the proper essence is administered, the disharmony is relieved, since two vibrations cannot occupy the same space.[12] Both systems, then, deal with the direction of energy for the patient's well-being.

Hahnemann explained his principle of "dynamization" by comparing it to the creation of heat in friction and to magnetization. To Hahnemann, dynamization was a procedure of letting go of energy that he saw as basically "immaterial and spiritual." Just as Mesmer dispersed blocks in his patients by his laying-on-of-hands, his soft music and dark rooms, Hahnemann believed drugs could work on the dynamic plane by "succussion or trituration," which would make active substances inactive and inactive ones highly active? Thus, Hahnemann warned against the dangers of homeopaths carrying medicines around in their pockets, for fear they would become too potent. This theory then, simply takes Mesmer's animal magnetism one step further in postulating the force that human energies can exert on inanimate objects.

Like Hahnemann, Mesmer saw chemicals as means of helping the body, of strengthening its

10 Trevor M. Cook, *Samuel Hahnemann: The Founder of Homoeopathic Medicine* (Wel-lingborough: Thorsons Publishers Limited, 1981).

11 George Vithoulkas, The *Science of Homoeopathy* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1981), p. 228.

12 *Ibid*., 99-101.3

13 *Ibid*., 102.4

natural systems, rather than merely covering up symptoms. In homeopathy thoro is a hierarchical gradation of functions and disturbances within the human organism? In fact, both homeopathic thought and mesmerism view this hierarchy as a basic law of the universe. This order is not limited to human beings, but extends outward to the universe and inward to tho atom. Both systems hypothesize an interconnectedness of the microcosm and tho macrocosm. On the macrocosmic level, we know that a sudden change in the electromagnetic field of the earth would wreak havoc on the planet. The slightest variation in the activity of the sun profoundly changes life on earth.[15] We are even affected by the phases of the moon. And what seem to us minute temperature changes have drastically altered the balance of all life forms.

In homeopathy, all of these phenomena illustrate a "hierarchy of functions", and the laws governing their interactions. It is this idea of hierarchy that is actually the concept of Oneness, from which all else has been created. All things and all levels are connected throughout the universe by this concept.[16] In the homeopathic system, health consists of freedom from pain in the physical body, having attained a state of well-being; freedom from passion on the emotional level, resulting in a dynamic state of serenity and calm; and freedom from selfishness in the mental sphere.

Homeopathy sees the levels as dynamic and in constant change. The human organism works as a totality within these levels. In defending against "morbidic stimuli"[17] the body creates symptoms; these symptoms are manifested on one or more of three levels of existence.[18] The body maintains a hierarchy of importance of these three levels, as well as within each level. A symptom can move from one plane to another or can move in different directions on the same level. The organism creates the best defense possible for any given moment and always attempts to limit symptoms to the most peripheral level. Any curative action must take the reverse course.[19]

Three factors that affect change at the "center"' of the symptom are: heredity, i.e.strength or

14 /b/d., p 37.

15 Joseph H. Battocletti, *Electromagnetism Man and the Environment* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1976), p. 5.

16 Ib/d., 37.

17 Ib/d., p 51.

18 *Ibid*., 147.

19 IbM., 231.

weakness based on genes passed down from parents; intensity of the morbidic stimuli; and the degree of interference by suppressive treatments. There is a certain threshold in any given stimulus below which there are no visible changes, and above which the defense mechanism generates processes that are perceived by the individual on one or more levels. There is a latent period or incubation period before actual symptoms develop, ranging from hours to days or even months?°

Hahnemann wrote about Mesmer in his most famous work, the *Organon of Medicine,*[21] but therafter it was seldom that any homeopath mentioned Mesmer or acknowledged his influence in the emerging philosophy until 18.94, when Dr. Roth, President of the British Homeopathic Society, contributed articles on the topic of mesmerism to the Society and its journal. He declares, '~Ne cannot any longer afford to sneer at the miracles performed at the institution, known by the name of Bethshan, since we have healers in our midst who dispense with both physic and faith. These healers are medical men."[22]

Christian Science

Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, vehemently denounced mesmerism and hypnotism, in the apparent belief that they are totally grounded in the physical realm and unrelated to Spirit or God.[23] But since she studied under the mesmerist Quimby, she must have been aware that her doctrine of the mind's influence on health could almost have come directly from Mesmer's writings. It seems that she was, then, simply maligning a rival in the field of healing.[24]

Chiropractic

Daniel David Palmer, before founding the modern chiropractic movement, became a pupil of Paul Caster, who was an internationally known magnetic healer. Palmer's theory of "subluxa-

20 Ibid., 79.

21 Samuel Hahnemann, *Organon of Medicine,* trans. William Beoricke (New Delhi: Jain Publishers, n.d.).
22 Coates, vi.

23Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health--with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: Trustees Under the Will of Mary Baker Eddy, 1934), p. 102.

24 Podmore, 285.

tions[1'], vertebral misalignments or lesions that interrupt nerve impulses and thus produce disease, bears obvious relation to Mesmer's postulates on blockage of the flow of universal fluid.[2s]

Reichian Theory

Wilhelm Reich's ideas display many similarities to the work of Mesmer, and on the basis of his theories alone, we would have to assume that he had been heavily influenced by Mesmer's writings. Having begun as a disciple of Freud, Reich gradually became disenchanted with the psychoanalytic movement and redirected his concentration onto physiological causes of mental and physical afflictions. Through his research in biophysics, he arrived at a belief in a universal, mass-free energy source that he called 'the orgone." In its attributes and action, the primal or-gone energy corresponds almost exactly to Mesmer's universal fluid. In living creatures, the or-gone becomes life energy, just as the universal flow is manifested as animal magnetism.[26]

A perhaps even more striking parallel appears in Reich's theory of muscular "armoring." In his patients with psychological disorders, Reich almost always observed chronic muscular tensions or spasms, especially in the abdominal area. He found that if these rigidities could be relaxed, through special breathing exercises and other treatments, the patient often experienced some relief of the mental condition. Hence he surmised that these inflexible areas were blocking the flow and discharge of orgone energy in the body?

Mesmer had preceded him: 'q'he causes of all maladies or aberrations is an engorgement, obstruction, disturbance or suppression of circulation in a part which, compressing the blood vessels or lymphatics, and especially the nerve branches...occasion a spasm or tension within the parts wherein they lead". Mesmer also maintained that 'The nerves are the best conductors of magnetism in the body....Most abundant and sensible are the nervous centers of the diaphragm, the solar plexus, umbilical, etc. This mass of an infinity of nerves corresponds with all parts of the body".[28] To Mesmer, the solar plexus is the "common sensorium," the nerve cen-

25 R.C. Shafer (ed.), *Chiropractic Health Care: A Conservative Approach to Health Restoration, Maintenance, and Disease Resistance* (2nd ed.; Des Moines, Iowa: Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research, 1977), p.22.

26 Eden, 19-20.

27 /b/d., 24.

28 Eden, *Maxims on Animal Magnetism,* n.p., quoted in Eden, *Animal Magnetism and the Life Energy,* 43-44.

ter that controls all the sensory organs. Reich postulated a 't:irst orgonotic sense," also centered at the solar plexus. For both men, the solar plexus was the primary point of contact with the universal energy.[29]

In his eighteenth and nineteenth propositions, Mesmer described a negative energy, opposed to the universal magnetic energy. Reich claimed to have discovered a comparable phenomenon, which he named "DOR" for "Deadly Orgone Energy," and which he said was radioactive and exceedingly harmful to the human body.[3°]

The similarity between Reich and Mesmer extends even to a fascination with paraphernalia. In addition to a "DOR-buster, a device for removing biologically stale, exhausted and harmful DOR from the body,"[31] Reich invented an Orgone Energy Accumulator, or Orgone Box. This served the same purpose as Mesmer's *baquet.* Both *baquet* and Orgone Box were "energy pumps."

Reich also believed that regular, total discharge of orgone energy through sexual activity was necessary to avoid neurosis. The connection with Mesmer's "ebb and fiov¢' required for harmony and balance is obvious.[32]

Gestalt Psychology

Fritz Perls's formulation of Gestalt psychology is very close to the philosophical basis of mesmerism in the premium it places on wholeness: 'q'he basic premise of Gestalt psychology is that human nature is organized into patterns or wholes, that it is experienced by the individual in these terms, and that it can only be understood as a function of the patterns of wholes of which it is made".[33] Mesmer states, in his *Maxims on Animal Magnetism:* "As the body forms itself through the continuity of matter, thus sensations result from the continuity of the impressions or affections of the organized body. This continuity of affections constitutes a whole, a unity, which can combine, arrange, compare, modify, and organize itself; and the result of this is a thought."[34]

29 Eden, 37.

30 /b/d., 23.

31 /b/d., 23-24.

32 Edward N.Mann~ *Orgone, Reich and Eros* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 157.

33 Fritz Perks, "The Gestalt Approach," *Counseling and Psychotherapy...,* ed. Ben N. Ard, Jr., 1975, pp. 5-6.

34 Eden, 181.

Peris says that 'q'he healthy organism seems to operate within what we might call a hierarchy of values...the dominant need of the organism at any times becomes the foreground figure".[35] The gestalt, the pattern, becomes "closed" or complete when the need is satisfied. Under this approach, Mesmer would maintain that as all things are united by the universal fluid, the free flow of this energy which restores balances closes the gestalt. "Man is in a state of health when all the parts of which he is composed are able to exercise the functions for which they are destined. If perfect order rules all of his functions, one calls this state the state of harmony,.[36]

In the attempt to perceive the patterns of the individual's needs, Gestalt therapy must, as does mesmerism, depend greatly on intuitive processes, especially in light of the tenet that the florce which basically energizes all our action..seems to be emotion...Emotions are the very language of the organism"?? Gestalt is therefore a non-intellectual discipline, as is mesmerism. Both rely heavily on emotional release.

Mesmer stated a very similar idea:

The faculty of feeling the connection within the universal harmony which creatures and events have to the conservation of each individual is what we should call instinct... Because this instinct is an effect of order, of harmony, it becomes a sure criterion of actions and sensations.... The man who can only use what he calls reason is like one who uses glasses to examine everything which might come into his view; he becomes habitually disposed not to see with his own eyes and can never see objects as others see them. Instinct is natural, reason is artificial Every man arrives at his own reason, but instinct is a determined and invariable result of the order of nature upon each individual.[38]

For Peris, effective psychotherapy is "not an excavation of the past...but an experience of living in the present...the patient learns how to integrate his thoughts, feelings, and actions".[39]

35 Perk, 6.
36 Eden, 178.

37 Per/s, 9.

38 Eden, 183-184.

39 Per/s, 7-8.

Mesmer also worked only in the here and now, to achieve present harmony. The ritual aspect of both the Gestalt group and Mesmer's group magnetic treatments (with the *baquet,* e.g.). provides a justification for change in the immediate time frame and environment which can carry over into the rest of life.

Rogers's Client-centered Therapy

Though the "client-centered-framewor!¢' therapy of Carl Rogers is certainly not founded upon a theory of cosmic interactions, his listing of "Conditions of the Therapeutic Process"[40] comes surprisingly close to describing the requisites of mesmeric practice.

These Conditions are:

1. 'q'hat two persons are in contact." In mesmerism, of course, there is actual physical contact, which has an incontestable psychological effect, thus fulfilling Rogers's definition of contact, since "each makes a perceived or subceived difference in the experiential field of the other."[41]

2. 'q'hat the first person, whom we shall term the client, is in a state of incongruence, being vulnerable or anxious." This corresponds to the mesmeric concept of the patient's being out of harmony--that is, experiencing blockages in the ebb and flow--and therefore being in a susceptible state (a state of incompletion) in which he or she can receive the transmitted animal magnetism. Mesmer recognized that this susceptibility was necessary for treatment to begin, for he defined a healthy person as one who could not be affected by animal magnetism; as the subject regained health through balancing of the internal system, the magnetic treatments elicited less and less reaction.[42]

3. 'q'hat the second person, whom we shall term the therapist, is congruent in the relationship." It is perhaps impossible for a mesmerist not to be congruent within the relationship. Congruency requires that "self-experiences are accurately symbolized and are included in the self-concept in this accurately symbolized form".[43] Since the mesmerist sees himself as only a vehicle or pipeline for energy transfer, his self-concept *as therapist* is non-ego-involving. His experiences in the relationship are symbolized in terms of the flow of the universal fluid and the attempt to establish harmony.

4. 'q'hat the therapist is experiencing unconditional positive regard toward the client." This

40 Carl Rogers, "A Theory of Therapy as Developed in the Client-centered Framework," *Counseling and Psychotherapy* ..... p. 55.

41Rogers, 49.

42Eden, 21.

43Rogers, 48.

is, of course, a necessary condition for a therapist trying to direct positive healing energy toward a patient. If this were not the case, the mesmerist might perceive the subject as a source of negative, oppositional energy (see Propositions 18 and 19, Appendix B). Unconditional positive regard should be particuiarly easy for a mesmerist, functioning in a non-verbal mode and viewing the patient as a fellow-participant in the universal fluid connection, one who simply needs a "helping hand" bearing the gift of animal magnetism.

5. 'q'hat the therapist is experiencing an empathic understanding of the client's internal frame of reference." Mesmer believed that the qualitative nature of sensory impressions and of thoughts is dependent upon a "basic sensory apparatus" of which the senses are extensions, the center of this apparatus being located in the solar plexus.[44] In other words, what a person feels and thinks is largely determined by the energy level of her or his nervous system--the distribution pattern of animal magnetism in the body.

6. 'q'hat the client perceives, at least to a minimal degree, conditions 4 and 5, the unconditional positive regard of the therapist for him, and the empathic understanding of the therapist." The client's attitude toward the therapist plays an important part in the success of most therapies, but especially so in mesmerism and hypnotism, which require that the client experience the entering of a different mode--that is to say, a perception of significant change *during the time of treatment,* and caused by that treatment. It is necessary, then, for the client to place a high degree of trust in the therapist; consequently, the perception of positive regard and empathy becomes crucial. The knowledge that the mesmerist is attempting to pass healing animal magnetism from his own body into the client's (recognition of giving) increases the client's feeling of self-worth and facilitates his awareness of the therapist's regard. Another significant correspondence appears in Rogers's summarization of 'q'he Process of Therapy": "Step 8. As this reorganization of the self-structure continues, his concept of self becomes increasingly congruent with his experience, the self now including experiences which previously would have been too threatening to be in awareness".[4s] This consorts well with Mesmer's emphasis on achieving wholeness and unity through removal of the blockages preventing free flow of energies, and with his insistence on the necessity of producing crisis behavior, in which repressed emotions may break into consciousness. It was quite common for Mesmer's patients to literally "see themselves in a new light," through what were called "magnetic visions". Finally, one may view Rogers's non-directive approach, in the context of openness to variables in the therapeutic relationship, as being very much in the tradition of mesmerism, which was totally centered on the client's reaction to the therapist's positive input.

44 Eden, 37.

45 Rogers, 58.

Other Therapies

Mesmerism was the first in a long succession of American therapies to represent to some people not only personal growth, but religion as well. Mesmerism disagreed with narrowly interpreted medicine, as well as narrowly interpreted theology, thereby paving the way for a more intellectual belief system.[46] in this respect, mesmerism is closely linked with other '~ranspersonal" psychologies which connect psychology with religion, such as Transcendental Meditation, Scien-tology, Psychosynthesis, and Silva Mind Control. These movements work under the belief that reality goes beyond the subject-object relationship to a consciousness not definable in Western scientific and theological frameworks. Fuller argues that these movements take on the appearances of a cult, since they take what is considered sacred and supreme and apply it to everyday life, thereby making the simple achievements the greatest.[47] Mesmer's patients had never before experienced the kind of energy release or atmosphere arrived at during the magnetic sessions, so his work became couched in quasi-religious, ritualistic overtones. Mesmerism as a movement, therefore, gained much more publicity and had much wider influence than it would have had without its religious nature. As Fuller says, "By committing the individual to at least the possibility of arriving at new understandings about the nature and meaning of reality, they (Mesmerism, TM, Scientology) serve as powerful sources of cultural innovation."[48]

A brief consideration of some further concordances may be helpful in establishing the existence of a continuity of therapeutic approach. Transactional analysis, e.g., appears particularly germane, in its concept of "strokes." As Dusay puts it:

'q'he basic motivating factor for all human social behavior is the need for *strokes.* Dr. Rene $pitz...concluded that infants and children need a great deal of physical contact for survival. This contact is what transactional analysts term strokes, and they are the backbone and the motivating need for all human transactions. The lack of strokes has both physical and mental deleterious effects...throughout the entire realm of life, it is doubtful that words can completely take the place of actual physical touching".[49] Could the fulfillment of this basic need have been a primary factor in Mesmer's success? It seems highly likely.

46

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48

49
Fuller, 167.

Ibid., 168.

Ibid.

John Dusay, "Transactional Analysis in Counseling," *Counseling and Psychotherapy...,* pp.12-13.

Though Mesmer's therapy can be considered non-directive under Rogers's terminology, under Thorne's rendering of the therapist-client relationship, all therapies are at least in part directive, in that the prestige of the professional therapist establishes "a relationship of dominance", that the therapist chooses the procedure of treatment, and that the course of the therapy must be evaluated in terms of the expectations and perceptions of both partiesfi°In this sense, his statement that 'the need for direction is inversely correlated with the person's potentialities for effective self-regulation" agrees with Mesmer's observation that as the patient approaches a state of health, the effect of animal magnetism approaches zeroil[1] Further parallels may be found in biocentric therapy, with its stress on releasing blocked feelings through "breathing techniques, neo-Reichian body work, fantasy exercises, forms of psychodrama, and so forth";[52] in direct decision therapy, which requires putting oneself in the client's place and creating an environment in which the client can see that it is all right to change;[53] and in Tyler's minimum-change therapy, which underlines the importance of "lending one's own strength to the client for the period during which he needs it" and holds that 'q'he experience of having someone really care about him is...an indispensable pert of what counseling means for a client."[54]

Using Mesmer's work as a touchstone, one is able to discern a certain pattern or approach common to many therapeutic constructs. As a preliminary resume, it appears that therapies stand in the camp of mesmerism insofar as they partake of any or all of the following elements:

1. Physical contact with intent to produce beneficial change

2. Ritual

3. Altered states of consciousness

4. Intuitive processes

5. Evocation of crisis behavior

6. A focus on wholeness and balance

7. Positive, but basically non-directive, intervention on the part of the therapist

50 Frederick C. Thornc,"Principles of Directive Counseling and Psychotherapy," *Counseling and Psychotherapy...,* pp. 67-68.

51 Thorne, p. 68.

52 Nathaniel Branden, "An Informal Discussion of Biocentric *Therapy,"Counseling and Psychotherapy..., p. 138.*

53 Harold Greenwald, "Direct Decision Therapy," *Counseling and Psychotherapy...,* pp. 153-168.

54 Leona E. Tyler, "Minimum Change Therapy," *Counseling and Psychotherapy...,* pp. 219-224.

8. Animal Magnetism or Magnetic Healing

In the final analysis, though, it is possible to abstract the essence of mesmerically-oriented therapy in three words: feeling, caring, sharing.

Conclusion

The essential truth about mesmerism is that it was not (and is not) an aberration, a freak, a strange and poisonous fruit on the wholesome tree of medicine. Rather, it was a natural development within a world-view extending from antiquity to the present. This is the belief that man is not a being whose influence is limited solely to mechanistic and societal interactions, but a full participant in a larger world of energy--whether seen as divine or mundane, still usable as a tool. It is this continuity of approach to the manipulation of existential circumstances that has largely been missed or underemphasized by previous historians.

Though Mesmer did not acknowledge any of his predecessors, it seems appropriate to give credit where it is due. The full roster of known and possible influences on Mesmer has never been collected. This work is but a start. And to the author's knowledge, the idea that Mesmer studied Chinese medical theory, and applied its concepts in developing his system, has not received adequate attention.

The study of post-mesmeric therapies gives evidence that elements of Mesmer's regimen must have an inherent appeal to the human mind, as well as a demonstrated effectiveness. Though many therapists have followed the typical path of learning from a teacher and then repudiating him, the principles of mesmerism listed in Chapter 4 continue to recur.

The ultimate insight to be gained from mesmeric studies is that there are few truly original ideas on healing. At each new turning in our apprehension of the universe, we can only take the whole as we know it and rearrange it. To understand this is to understand that healing must be eclectic by nature. Past influences are always at work, no matter how subtle their effect. Keeping in mind that we always must function within a very limited area of a vast historical structure could lead to a new and beneficial openness of approach to the problems of human existence.

I suggest, therefore, that in the present intensive search for more effective psychophysical therapies, mesmerism is worthy of investigation. Subjected to the rigors of modern scientific research, it may yield unexpected riches, new insights into the human mind, into man as an "energy being", and into the organism's still-mysterious power to heal itself.

A History Of Hypnotism

by Ormond McGill and Barry Brilliant

In the world of modern medicine, hypnotism now stands as an established therapeutic aid. But it has not always basked in the light of scientific approval; the shadows of sorcery and quackery have long lain across that peculiar state of mind that exists somewhere beyond the borders of waking and sleeping, between intense awareness and the flow of dream. The story of hypnotism has been colored by the conjectures and beliefs of those who made its history--beliefs often without foundation.

The roots of hypnosis are lost in the abyss of the ages. But the human race has always known and explored altered states of consciousness. The peoples of the ancient world knew many of the keys that open the gates to a different reality, such as fasting, meditation, sleep deprivation--and even dance, as we see in the ecstatic states

achieved by the whirling dervishes of Turkey; Haitian and African voodoo dancers; and American Indians in their dance ceremonies. Yogis, fakirs, Persian magi, and Christian mystics such as St. Anthony of Padua and St. Theresa of Avila have all made use of trance states.

These mental transformations could also be chemically induced. The legendary Pythia, priestess of the Delphic Oracle in Greece, inhaled sulfurous fumes from a cleft in the rock within the temple, then spoke her strange prophecies. African witch doctors and other sbamen also prepare themselves by taking a substance appropriate for the ceremony they are to perform.

Every priesthood has made use of hypnotic practices: darkness, flickering lights, incense, and chanting make a powerful combination to fascinate, awe, and exalt the worshipers. The first physicians were priests who invoked their gods to cure disease, and the esoteric knowledge of trance-like states used for healing was passed along in ritualistic form from master to initiate.

The prophets of the Old Testament were people who were able to go into trance states, whereupon they "prophecied," which in those days could mean speaking of the present or the past, as well as the future.
Altered states of consciousness have been a favorite subject of folktale and literature: the

long "sleeps" of Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, and Rip van Winkle; Siegfried understanding the language of birds after tasting the dragon's blood; the berserkers and doppelganger-visions of Norse saga; Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth.*

Although trance states were known and used in the Middle Ages, the church banned their use by unauthorized people and gradually came to condemn hypnotism as satanic.

When we think of hypnotism today, one name dominates the starting point: Mesmer. Even today the name stirs passions. Was he a flamboyant pioneer of hypnotherapeutic techniques and father of group therapy, as is believed in Eastern Europe, or was he, as many in the West maintain, a bombastic charlatan who pirated his ideas? Mesmerism is still clearly labeled quackery in the minds in those who prefer experimentation to be more sedate.

Franz Anton Mesmer was born in Austria in 1734. He became interested in what was then called 'fascination" or "bewitchment" while studying medicine and theology at the University of Vienna. Having witnessed an accident in which a young woodcutter was injured, he was surprised to find that he could lessen the bleeding by passing his hand over the lacerated leg.

Mesmer pursued the study of bewitchment under Father Kircher, famous for "bewitching" chickens, and the great Jesuit healer Maximilian Hell, professor at the University, who claimed to produce cures in patients by applying magnets to the diseased parts of the body.

He also studied church exorcism rituals, as well as the "laying on of hands" healing methods of the Jesuit Father Gassner, who dramatized his curative ritual by dressing hmself in a red robe and surrounding his patients with clouds of incense. Mesmer, however, favored a series of hand passes such as he had used on the woodcutter. He found he could bring about cures like those apparently produced by the magnets, either by this method, or, like Gassner, by placing his hands directly on the affected area.

He believed in the '11uidic" or magnetism theory of Galen, the second-century Greek physician, as did most scientists of his day. His contribution to this theory was the idea that this magnetism existed in man and animals (Mesmer coined the term, "animal magnetism") and could be passed between them.

After graduating as a medical doctor in 1776, Mesmer established a successful practice in Vienna and continued his investigations. His work became fashionable, and he was elected a member of the Bavarian Academy, a prestigious medical group. As his practice flourished and his fame mounted, so did the jealousy of his peers, and their outrage at his straying from orthodox methods.

Medicine at that time was still quite primitive, though progress had been made beyond the simple bleed-and-purge treatments of earlier times. Without modern sanitation, anesthetics, antibiotics, and instruments, the cure rate was frustratingly low. The concoction of medications was still basically dependent on the imagination or whim of the doctor, and there was little or no knowledge of psychosomatic medicine; in this field they were less advanced than ancient Greek physicians and African witch doctors. Mesmer's astonishing cures, using astonishingly simple methods, raised hackles among the medical fraternity.

Under a barrage of attacks from his former associates, Mesmer finally fled to Paris; life in Vienna had become insufferable for him.

Paris was ripe for the practice of mesmerism. A "youth culture" reigned. The King was twen-ty-four, the Queen twenty-three, and they abhorred all "old-hat" ideas; whatever the elderly had to say was of no interest, and novelty was valued for its own sake. Since the academicians and the medical establishment condemned Mesmer, he found great favor with the young aristocrats, and especially with the Queen, though he himself was no youth. The Queen's patronage assured that the court and nobles would flock to him.

They came in such numbers that Mesmer could not possibly treat all of them, so he developed his *baquet* system The word *"baquet"* simply means 'tub," but in this context it refers to the whole apparatus and process.

The *baquet* enabled Mesmer to treat up to thirty people at a time. In a ritual atmosphere, the patients entered the treatment room and were seated about the tub, which contained several layers of bottles laid in convergent rows and covered with about a foot of water. One end of bent iron rods dipped into the water; the other end extended from the tub and was applied to the affected area of the patient's body. The group formed a "magnetic chain" by holding hands. Music

and singing emanating from another room enhanced the sense of ritual.

Since many patients experienced a "convulsive crisis" of bizarre behavior such as is seen nowadays in voodoo rituals and the evangelical churches, Mesmer became convinced that this reaction, rather than a sleep-like trance, was necessary for a cure. In this he antedated primal therapy and other cathartic systems of the twentieth century.

The distant thunder of the approaching French Revolution was growing louder. This had the effect of making mesmerism even more popular. In such an atmosphere of social unrest, nervous aristocrats developed more and more psychosomatic ailments and rushed to Mesmer to be cured.

Mesmer's students spread his ideas far beyond Paris. Again criticism of his methods (and his clientele, in this time of anti-royalist feeling) mushroomed, and the scientific community became more and more vocal in its rejection of his animal magnetism theory. Finally, in 1784, a commission was set up to test the claims for animal magnetism. It included Benjamin Franklin (then ambassador to France), Antoine Lavoisier, the father of modern chemistry, and Dr. Guillotin, the only M.D. of the group, who was the developer of the guillotine, prime symbol of Revolutionary terror; he was later to become its victim himself.

As a test, Mesmer attempted to magnetize trees, maintaining that the magnetic fluid would flow from the trees to the patients passing under them and effect a cure. Instead, the "cure" descended upon those who passed under the nonmagnetized trees. The commission, though it recognized the reality of mesmerism, had to conclude, 'q'he theory which Mesmer maintains of the existence of a special magnetic "fluidism' has to be ascribed to the power of human imagination.'' The commission forbade French doctors to have anything to do with mesmerism, and a second commission came to similar conclusions.

These negative verdicts did not stifle all interest in mesmerism: the kings of Bavaria, Denmark, and Russia ordered their doctors to study and test the theories and methods of animal magnetism. Most of Eastern Europe, however, took the road of more conservative research, studying reflexes and behavior changes-the road leading to Pavlov and his theories of conditioned responses. Mesmer himself, most of his clients having gone to the guillotine or fled the country,

moved to Germany, where he practiced quietly until his death in 1815.

After Mesmer, and despite the taboo placed on mesmerism, some prominent French medical men still pursued the intriguing phantom. The Marquis de Puysegur repeated many of Mesmer's experiments. He was a mild-mannered man, and many of the placid peasant folk he treated dozed off into what appeared to be slumber, instead of showing crisis behavior like Mesmer's high-strung aristocrats. So the Marquis is credited with discovering the state known as "som-nambulistic trance."

The Marquis' brother, Dr. Armand de Puysegur, soon founded a school for the teaching of animal magnetism. And books on this forbidden subject continued to appear, including volumes by Deleuze, librarian at the Museum of Paris, and the renowned psychologist Dr. Alfred Binet, the man who laid the groundwork for the "IQ test."

In 1813, Abbot Faria, from the Portuguese colony of Goa in India, brought a new style to animal magnetism in his public performances. Seating his subjects in chairs, he would order them to close their eyes. Then, in a loud voice, he would command, "Sleep!" Large numbers of subjects obeyed the order and went instantly in the trance state. Faria's performances created a great sensation.

His obvious success at inducing the trance state led some people to wonder what connection a mysterious magnetic fluid could possibly have with verbal commands. Faria's pupil, Nozet, eventually put forward the important psychological axiom that any idea firmly implanted in the mind tends to generate its own actuality. This was the beginning of the removal of human behavior from the realm of universal forces and the placing of it in the province of reaction to stimuli.

In 1826, a third commission was called in France. After six years of study, it reported that there was enough evidence for the phenomenon of animal magnetsim to warrant further research. But in 1840, yet another commission condemned mesmerism once again.

The Englishman Dr. James Esdaile was one of the staunch supporters of animal magnetism, and with good reason: using hand passes to produce anesthesia, he performed over two thousand operations in India.[1] This was the more remarkable because, at a time when surgical mortality was horrendous, he lost comparatively few patients; healing was accelerated, the infection rate low. If chloroform and ether had not come along in 1848, mesmerism might have become generally recognized as an effective anesthetic.

Meanwhile, an important event took place in England. In 1841, a French mesmerist named Lafontaine performed public experiments at Manchester. Dr. James Braid, a Scots surgeon living in that city, was in the audience. At first he was sure it was all a hoax, but during later performances he began to accept the reality of the process. Braid did not believe in the animal magnetism explanation; he looked for a physiological cause. Using methods similar to Lafontaine's, he put his assistant and his wife to "sleep" by having them focus their eyes on one point. Con-yinced that this had not been caused by anything emanating from himself, but that they were "asleep" as the result of a physical effect, Braid theorized that 'lqxed gazing produced the phenomenon by paralyzing the nerve centers of the eyes and their dependent areas by destroying the balance of the nervous system."

We know now that Braid was wrong, but his work was extremely important because it indicated that the hypnotic state does not require the personal intervention of a hypnotist, or the action of an imperceptible magnetic fluid.

Braid's technique was at first called "Braidism," until he gave it the name, "hypnotism," deriving it from the Greek word for sleep, "hypnos." Later he recognized that the mental condition his process produced resembled sleep only in outward appearance, so he attempted to change the name, but in vain. "Hypnotism" had a nice ring to it; it had caught the public fancy, so hypnotism it was, and hypnotism it remains.

Braid and Lafontaine were soon involved in a feud over the truth behind hypnotism, or mag-

1 James Esdaile, Mesmerism in India and it.g Practical Application in Surgery and Medicine (Chicago: The Psychic Research Co., n.d.).

netism. Then Dr. John Elliotson, professor of medicine at the University of London, leaped into the fray as another champion of magnetism. The quarrel over theory grew hot.

Baron yon Reichenbach, an Austrian nobleman living near Vienna, also came to the defense of magnetism. In his researches into magnetic power, he reported findings that magnetic fields could affect the human organism (a finding that has received some corroboration in this century) and that magnets exhibited certain enigmatic qualities, such as a flame-like emanation from their poles, visible to sensitive people.[2] Braid pooh-poohed his reports, saying that such phenomena could have a subjective origin from within the subject--perhaps a polite way of saying that the Baron had a vivid imagination.[3]

Braid's view of hypnotism, though it was faulty, came closer to the truth than previous theories, in that it placed the source of the phenomenon within the subject, rather than in fluidic transfer or special powers of the hypnotist.

Other researchers continued to try new methods. In America, J. Stanley Grimes proposed a verbal suggestion method that he called "electrobiology." Back in France, Dr. Azam experimented with hypnotic anesthesia, and Abros-August Liebault, a physician from Nancy, began treating patients with hypnotism in 1866. He gave no examination or diagnosis, but simply hypnotized his patients and, in a monotonous voice, overwhelmed them with suggestions of well-being. Hundreds of cures were reported.

Most of Liebault's colleagues regarded him as a quack, but a professor from the University of Nancy, Hippolyte Bernheim, became a convert, and soon Bernheim, too, was performing many treatments at the Nancy hospital, using suggestion therapy. The two men founded the Nancy school of hypnotism, which soon acquired a worldwide reputation.

Dr. Jean-Marie Charcot, the great neurologist, now began to delve into hypnosis. Trying it out in his therapy, he achieved striking results. Charcot founded a school at the Salpetriere mental

2 Drayton, 15-16.

3 Baron Charles yon Rcichenbach, Physico-Ph~iolo~cal Researches in the F)ynarnics of Ma?etism: Electricity.: Heat: I .i~ht: ~'.ryxtalliTation: and Chemi.~m: in their Relaticm.~ to Vital Force (New York: Partridge & Brittan, 1885).

hospital, using hysterical patients as his subjects. There he observed the apparent transfer of one patient's ailments into the body of another, which seemed to lend some credence to the old "magnetic fluid" theory.

Charcot was studying "deep hypnosis," which implied loss of consciousness, while the doctors at Nancy were obtaining results with "light hypnosis." The two schools could have learned from each other and expanded the horizons of their research, but there was little meeting ground between them. The Nancy method was based on psychology and verbal suggestion; Charcot, the famed diagnostician, concerned himself with examining sensitivity and reflexes.

Charcot died in 1893, and the Salpetriere school quickly sank into obscurity. The Nancy school became paramount, but there was no scientist with the public stature to maintain the importance of hypnosis, against the never-ending attacks by scientists who could not fit it into their worldview. But there was one man who might have been able to prevent this collapse: Sigmund Freud.

Freud studied at both the Salpetriere and the Nancy schools. For a time he used hypnotism in his practice, but he was not a very good hypnotist. He acknowledged his debt to hypnotic theory but developed his own method of treatment, which he named "psychoanalysis." Freud's new system quickly captured the public interest, because of the emphasis he placed on sex and the interpretation of dreams. And since Freud's theories offered explanations for much of what was all mystery before, hypnotism was pushed even further down. It is also possible that hypnotism was too "easy' and too impersonal: that is, the patient was often not even allowed to tell his troubles. People turned eagerly to a system under which they could talk to their heart's con-tent--for years if need be, without fear of being contradicted or judged.

"Every day in every way I am becoming better and better"--this slogan for general good health became part of the public consciousness in America during the early part of the twentieth century. For a time it was repeated daily in nearly every household in the country, thanks to the French psychologist Emile Coue and his system of self-hypnosis, which he called "autosuggestion." His very successful lecture tour of the United States kept hypnotism in the public eye, though it did little to revive scientific interest in hypnotism. In medical circles, it was definitely out of style.

Not so with stage performers and faith healers, however. Harking back to ancient rituals, the Christian cultists found the "convulsive crisis" very effective in their services. And hypnotism stage shows sprang up in profusion during the last years of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth in America. To their credit, these shows helped to keep hypnotism alive in the mind of the public, but because some hypnotists made their subjects do ridiculous things, hypnotism became a ludicrous toy, thus increasing the medical world's distaste and disinterest. However, the hypnotism show, now shorn of some of its sensationalism, still retains an established place in the entertainment field.

Fiction had also fostered erroneous ideas of the sinister uses of hypnotism, as in Poe's 'q'he Case of M. Valdemar," in which a man who has died is kept in a state of preservation, and able to speak, because of being hypnotized at the point of death. The novels about Svengali and Dracula also added to hypnotism's unsavory reputation, as did films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.*

In Russia, the supposed hypnotic influence of the monk Rasputin over the Czarina, and his eventual assassination by Russian nobles in 1916, added to the idea of hypnotism as a malignant power--and the dramatic story spread worldwide.

It was not until the 1920's that a revival of scientific interest in hypnotism began to stir. The famous Russian physiologist, Ivan Parlor, gave a great deal of consideraton to hypnotism in his studies on conditioned reflexes. In America, clinical behaviorist Andrew Salter carried on Pav-Iovian theory, concluding that the basis of hypnosis is conditioning. Some researchers, such as Schultz and Jacobsen, investigated self-hypnosis under such names as "autogenic training" and "progressive relaxation."

During World War II, Dr. James Eastabrook and other physicians began to use hypnotic therapy to cure war neurosis, or "shell shocl~' in soldiers, although sodium pentothal, popularly known as '1ruth serum," was the preferred treatment. Military psychiatrists in Europe gladly used hypnotism to accelerate the treatment of hysterical patients, and reports of their successes gradually helped to stimulate interest in the field. Scientists began examining the use of hypnotism in dentistry, obstetrics, anesthesia, and the treatment of psychoneuroses. Medical science was once again taking up a useful tool it had cast aside.

In America, many doctors interested in the subject found that they had to associate with stage performers and lay hypnotists in order to learn the art. With the advent of '~the grand old man of hypnosis," Dr. Milton Erickson, the field rapidly expanded and grew in respectability. In 1958 the AMA officially acknowledged the use and value of hypnotism as therapy. Today research continues on many fronts--in the relief of allergies, in weight and smoking problems, in dream interpretation, and perhaps most important, in combating the increasing stress that is so pervasive in modern life.

A practice that began in the great healing mystery rituals conducted by physician-priests in the service of strange gods is now back in the realm of medicine, to aid in the struggle against the burdens and pains of body and spirit. The wheel has turned full circle.

not forthcoming.]

22. It will make known that the magnet and artificial electricity only have, as regards illness, properties which they share with several other agents provided by Nature, and that if useful effects have been derived from the use of the latter, they are due to Animal Magnetism.

[Some physicians were treating patients with primitive electrical devices. But the user, not the thing used conveyed the beneficial effect.]

23. It will be seen from the facts, in accordance with the practical rules I shall draw up, that this principle can cure nervous disorders directly and other disorders indirectly.

[Mental problems would be cured by the action of animal magnetism directly upon the nerves. Physical disorders, Mesmer thought, were due to blockage of function of the viscera and other organs, through tensions propagated in the nerves. Input of energy would restore the free ebb and flow of the universal fluid.]

24. With its help, the physician is guided in the use of medicaments; he perfects their action, brings about and controls the beneficial crises in such a way as to master them.

/The process fosters intuitive diagnosis and treatment.]

25. By making known my method, I shall show by a new theory of illness the universal utility of the principle I bring to bear on them.

26. With this knowledge, the physician may determine reliably the origin, nature and progress of illnesses, even the most complicated; he will prevent them from gaining ground and will succeed in curing them without ever exposing the patient to dangerous effects of unfortunate consequence, whatever his age, temperament and sex. Women, even in pregnancy and childbirth, will enjoy the same advantage.

27. In conclusion, this doctrine will enable the physician to determine the state of *each* individual's health and safeguard him from the maladies to which he might otherwise be subject. The art of healing will thus reach its final stage of perfection.

Although there is not one of these Assertions regarding which my constant observations over a period of twelve years leaves me in any uncertainty, I quite realize that compared with old-es-tablished principles and knowledge, my system may appear to contain as much illusion as truth. I must, however, ask the enlightened to discard their prejudices and at least suspend judgement, until circumstances enable me to furnish the necessary evidence of my principles. Consideration for those languishing in pain and unhappiness through the very inadequacy of known methods is well calculated to inspire the desire for and even the hope of more useful methods.

Physicians, being the repositories of public trust for everything connected with the preservation and happiness of mankind, **are alone** enabled, by the knowledge on which their profession **is** founded, to judge of the importance of the discovery I have just announced and realize its implications. In a word, they alone are qualified to put it into practice.

As I have the privilege of sharing the dignity of their profession, I am in no doubt whatever that they will hasten to adopt and spread principles intended to alleviate the sufferings of humanity, **as soon as they realize** the importance of this Dissertation, written essentially for them, on the true conception of ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

> *[Mesmer noted the similarity of this phenomenon to physical magnetism, and since its influence was on the anbnal body, devised the term "animal Magnetism, as being descriptive of the influence. And in view of its universality, he spoke of this energy as fiuidic in nature. This universal fluid was pervasive of everything on Earth.*

Mesmer shows his conviction that in animal magnetism he felt he had discovered a panacea for mastering diseases of every kin& and aiding the suffering. Possibly Mesmer's optimism may have been too much, but his enthusiasm for his methods of treatment must be admired. He was a man who stood solidly behind his own convictions.

Mesmer is to be commended for this closing assertion on the Propositions relative to the operation of animal magnetism. He puts "his heart on his sleeve" as it were, to his fellow physicians, imploring that they give attention to his revolutionary method of therapy which he sincerely believes will be of great value to the medical profession in general; and, even more importantly, be of help to persons who are ill and in need of improved medical methods of treatment. His earnest convictions remove him complete from the realm of being a charlatan as some have unfairly charged, and present him as both an honest man and a scientist; and, above all as a physician who is genuinely concerned with healing the sick.

However, in turning from being a physician to a politician, Mesmer is asking a great deal of his fellow doctors. He is literally telling them to throw away their old methods of therapy (which means to discard all of their long years of trainb2g in medicine and professional practice) and use his methods instead. To expect a favorable reaction to such a request is asking too much of human nature. Other than a limited number of disciples who invariably spring up around something new, the majority invariably cling to old established patterns. The wheels of knowledge grind slowly. It has taken nearly two hundred years following Mesmer for what he had to say to begin to be appreciated.]

ratios are set up between the heavely bodies, the earth and its component parts.

[~Activity ratios" seems to refer to the varying degrees of energy ebb and flow.]

7.
The properties of Matter and the Organic Body depend on this operation.

[There is an affinity here with the view of matter as one of the transformational states of energy, dependent for its properties upon its rate of vibration.]

8. The animal body sustains the alternate effects of this agent, which by insinuating itself into the substance of the nerves, affects them at once.

[Mesmer believed that health in all its aspects was ch'rectly dependent on the state of the nerves.]

9. It is particularly manifest in the human body that the agent has properties similar to those of the magnet; different and opposite poles may likewise be distinguished, which can be changed, communicated, destroyed and strengthened; even the phenomenon of dipping is ob-

served.

[How Mesmer distinguished "opposite poles" of animal magnetism in the body is not known. "Dipping" refers to the movement of a magnetic needle pivoted to rotate in the vertical plane, so as to indicate the local inclination of the earth's magnetic field. Again, it is difficult to imagine what analogue of this effect he found in the body.]

10. The property of the animal body, which brings it under the influence of the heavenly bodies, and the reciprocal action of those surrounding it, as shown by its analogy with the Magnet, induced me to term it ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

11. The action and properties of Animal Magnetism, thus defined, may be communicated to other animate and inanimate

bodies. Both are more or less susceptible to it.

[The therapist can direct energy into the body of the patient, and can even "magnetize" water, or transmit the energy through iron or glass. Presumably, inanimate objects are less susceptible to animal magnetism than are creatures with highly developed nervous systems.]

12. This action and properties may be strengthened and propagated by the same bodies.

[Transmitted magnetism may be enhanced by the internal magnetism of the creature or object.]

13. Experiments show the passage of a substance whose rarefied nature enables it to penetrate all bodies without appreciable loss of activity.

[Mesmer experimented with magnetizing at a distance, through a screen or other obstruction placed between him and the patien[and found the effect to be the same as with direct contact. The scientists of that time were generally unable to conceive that energy could be transmitted without a "carrier;' so Mesmer adopted the idea or a fluid tha[like the neutrino, could pass

unhindered through solid matter.]

14. Its action is exerted at a distance, without the aid of an intermediate body.

[Physical contact with the subject was not necessary. Mesmer sometimes even magnetized patients from a separate room.]

15. It is intensified and reflected by mirrors, like light.

16. It is communicated, propagated and intensified by sounds.

[We know that Mesmer found music an effective aid in producing the desired results: the "beneficial crises." But the wording of this proposition seems to indicate that he may also have experimented with other sounds.]

17. This magnetic property may be stored up, concentrated and transported.

[Mesmer recounts his "magnetizing" of one teacup in a group of six; when the patient was touched with all the cups in succession, she reacted only to the magnetized one.]

18. I have said that all animate bodies are not equally susceptible; there are some, although very few, whose properties are so opposed that their very presence destroys all the effects of magnetism in other bodies.

[Certain people seem to be generators of negative energy: "black holes" that suck in and destroy the energy of those around them. Mesmer apparently encountered some persons who were so skeptical about his therapy that even as observers they upset the delicate rapport between mesmerist and subject. He may also be saying that there were some patients he could not cure.]

19. This opposing property also penetrates all bodies; it may likewise be communicated, propagated, stored, concentrated, and transported, reflected by mirrors and propagated by sound; this constitutes not merely the absence of magnetism, but a positive opposing property.

20. The Magnet, both natural and artificial, together with other substances, is susceptible to Animal Magnetism, and even to the opposing property, without its effect on iron and the needle undergoing any alteration in either case; this proves that the principle of Animal Magnetism differs essentially from that of mineral magnetism.

[That is, if a mesmerist imbues a magnet with animal magnetism (which as said above, can be stored in objects), then brings it near iron or a compass, he will find that its action is neither enhanced nor diminished.]

21. This system will furnish fresh explanations as to the nature of Fire and Light, as well as the theory of attraction, ebb and flow, the magnet and electricity.

[Obviously, Mesmer believed he had discovered the secret of the universe--an eighteenth-century equivalent of today's Holy Grail of physics, the Unified Field Theory. But the explanations were

economy of the animal body, the more we were compelled to admit our insufficiency. The knowledge that we have gained today about the nature and action of the nerves, imperfect though it be, leaves us in no doubt in this respect. We know that they are the principal agents of sensation and movement, but we are unable to restore them to their natural order when this has been interfered with. We confess this to our shame. The ignorance of bygone centuries on this point has sheltered physicians. The superstitious confidence which they had and which they inspire in their specifics and formulae made them despotic and presumptuous.

I have too much respect for Nature to be able to convince myself that the individual preservation of Man has been left to the mere chance of discovery and to the vague observations that have been made in the course of a number of centuries, finally becoming the domain of the few.

Nature has provided everything for the existence of the individual. Propagation takes place without "system" and without trickery. Why should preservation be deprived of the same advantage?The preservation of animals affords proof that the contrary is the case.

A non-magnetized needle, when set in motion, will only take a determined direction by chance, whereas a magnetized needle, having been given the same impulse, after various oscillations proportional to the impulse and magnetism received, will regain its initial position and stay there.Thus the harmony of organic bodies, when once interfered with, goes through the uncertainties of my first hypothesis, unless it is brought back and determined by the GENERAL AGENT, whose existence I recognize: it alone can restore harmony in the natural state.

Thus we have seen, in all ages, maladies which become worse or are cured with and without the help of Medicine, in accordance with different systems and by the most conflicting methods.These considerations have removed all doubt from my mind that there exists in Nature a universally acting principle which, independently of yourselves, operates what we vaguely attribute to Art and Nature.

The Twenty-seven Propositions

[Note: The propositions are grouped in four areas of emphasis: the universal source of the energy Mesmer calls animal magnetism; the relationship of this energy to the human body; the nature and function of this energy; and its role in curing disease.

My commentary on the propositions is enclosed in brackets.-B.B.]

1. There exists a mutual influence between the Heavenly Bodies, the Earth and Animate Bodies.
[Modem research supports this statement; not only is there the omnipresent force of gravity, but

the stars, planets, and living creatures have been found to generate electro-magnetic fields, which probably interact in exceedingly subtle ways. The idea of mutual or reciprocal influence was an extremely advanced one. Not until the twentieth century was it established that every particle bz
the universe exerts a force on every other particle, so that a human being or even an ant, has its effec~ however tenuous, on "the stars in their courses." Mesmer said, "Throughout the ages,
mortals, conforming to the teaching of their ongoing observations, have held the influence of the planets in great esteem. The dominant role of the planets was revealed in agriculture, navigation, and medicine more so than in other disciplines."But he took care to establish that he was not a believer in astrology: ~I emphasize that ! do not wish to defend the theory regarding the influence of the stars which was formerly defended by the astrologers, who boast powers to predict events to come and to know the destiny of men and at the same time swindle them of the contents of their purses, thanks to a sla'll filled with deceit. My purpose is solely to demonstrate that the celestial bodies act on our earth. Furthermore, that all things which are here act upon these celestial bodies in turn; that these move, act, and that all parts are changing and that our human bodies are equally submitted to the same dynamic action."]

2. A universally distributed and continuous fluid, which is quite without vacuum and of an incomparably rarefied nature, and which by its nature **is capable of** receiving, propagating, and communicating **all the impressions** of movement, is the means of this influence.

JMesruer was not the first to propose the existence of such a medium: among others, Sir Robert Boyle(J627-91), theAnglo-Irish physicist and chemist, posited a universal fluid that made it possible for human beings to exercise an action on each other. SO4T]

.
This reciprocal action is subordinated to mechanical laws that are hitherto unknown.

[Mesrner rejected any supernatural explanation for animal magnetism, believing it to be subject to physical laws.]

.
This action results in alternate effects that may be regarded as an Ebb and Flow.

tin his dissertation, Mesmer said, "I maintain that just as the alternate effects, in respect to gravity, produce in the sea the appreciable phenomenon which we term ebb and flow, so the INTENSIFICATION AND REMISSION of the said properties are subject to the same principle, causing animal bodies alternate effects similar to those sustained by the sea. ~S05T He recognized that there are periodic fluctuations in human energies, as well as depressed energy levels in illness, and related them to both external and internal influences.]

5. This ebb and flow is more or less general, more **or less** particular, more **or less** composite according to the nature of the causes determining it.

JMesruer may be referring to the universal energy flux, energy imbalances within the body, and combinations of the two.]

6. It is by this operation (the most universal of those presented by Nature) that the activity

the alternating effect of enjoyment and deprivation that he learns of the existence of light and its different degrees, but he would remain in ignorance of the distance, size and shape of objects if he did not learn, by comparing and combining the impressions of other organs, how to correct one by the other. Most sensations are therefore the result of his reflections on the impressions assembled in his organs.

Thus Man spends his early years in acquiring the prompt and correct use of his senses. His gift of observation, which he has from Nature, enables him to form himself, and the perfection of his faculties depends on its more or less constant application.

Among the infinite number of objects which come successively before him, his attention is chiefly attracted by those which interest him for more particular reasons.

Observation of the effects which Nature is universally and constantly producing on each individual is not the exclusive domain of Philosophers; universal interest makes an observer of almost every individual. These observations, multiplied in every age and every place, leave nothing to be desired as regards their reality.

The activity of the human mind, together with its ambition for knowledge, which is never satisfied, in seeking to perfect knowledge previous acquired, abandons observation, replacing it by vague and often frivolous speculation. It forms and accumulates systems which have only the merit of their mysterious abstraction. It departs imperceptibly from truth, to such an extent as to lose sight thereof, setting up ignorance and superstition in its stead. Human knowledge, thus perverted, ceases to possess any of the reality which it had to begin with.

Philosophy has occasionally made efforts to free itself of errors and prejudices, but by overturning those edifices with too much vigour it has covered the ruins with disdain, without fixing the attention on the precious things contained there.

We see among the different peoples the same opinions preserved in a form so disadvantageous and dishonourable for the human mind that it seems improbable that they could have been set up in that form.

Imposture and aberration of reason would have attempted in vain to win over nations and cause them generally to adopt such obviously absurd and ridiculous systems as we see today; truth alone and the general interest should have conferred their universal nature on these opinions.

It may therefore, nevertheless, be asserted that among the vulgar opinions of all ages, whose

principles are not rooted in the human heart, there are but few which, however ridiculous and even extravagant they may appear, cannot be regarded as the remains of an originally recognized truth.

Such are my reflections on knowledge in general, and more particularly on the fate of the doctrine of the influence of celestial bodies on the planet we inhabit. These reflections have induced me to seek, among the ruins of that science, brought low by ignorance, what it might have contained that was useful and true.

In accordance with my ideas on this subject, I published at Vienna in 1766 a thesis on the influence of planets on the human body. According to the familiar principles of universal attraction, ascertained by observations which teach us how the planets mutually affect one another in their orbits, how the sun and moon cause and control the ocean tides on our globe and in the atmosphere, I assert that those spheres also exert a direct action on all the parts that go to make up animate bodies, in particular on the nervous system, by an all-penetrating fluid. I denote this action by the INTENSIFICATION AND THE REMISSION of the properties of matter and organic bodies, such as gravity, cohesion, elasticity, irritability, electricity.

I maintain that just as the alternate effects, in respect of gravity, produce in the sea the appreciable phenomenon which we term ebb and flow, so the INTENSIFICATION AND REMISSION of the said properties, being subject to the action of the same principle, cause in animate bodies alternate effects similar to those sustained by the sea. By these considerations I established that the animal body, being subjected to the same action, likewise underwent a kind of ebb and flow. I supported this theory with different examples of periodic revolutions. I name the property of the animal body that renders it liable to the action of heavenly bodies and of the earth ANIMAL MAGNETISM. I explained by this magnetism the periodical changes which we observe in sex and in a general way those which physicians of all ages and in all countries have observed during illnesses.

My object then was only to arouse the interest of physicians; but, far from succeeding, I soon became aware that I was being taxed with eccentricity, that I was being treated like a man with a system and that my tendency to quit the normal path of Medicine was being construed as a crime.

I have never concealed my manner of thinking in this respect, being unable to convince myself that we have made the progress of which we boast in the art of healing.

Indeed, I have held that the further we advanced in our knowledge of the mechanism and

SELECTIONS FROM MESMER'S DISSERTATION WITH ANNOTATIONS

Compiled and annotated by Barry Brilliant

[Mesmer's] Foreword To The Public

THE DISCOVERY, which has so long been sought, of a principle acting on the nerves should be of interest to all. It has the twofold aim of adding to their knowledge and of making them happier, by affording a means of curing the maladies which have hitherto been treated with but scant success. The advantages and the singular nature of this system were responsible, some years ago, for the eagerness of the public to grasp the first hopes which I held out; and it is by perverting them that envy, presumption and incredulity have in a very short space of time succeeded in relegating them to the status of illusions, causing them to fall into oblivion.

I have vainly endeavoured to resuscitate them by the enormous number of facts; nevertheless, prejudices won the day and truth has been sacrificed. But, it will be asked today of what does this discovery consist? how have you come by it? what idea may be formed of its advantages? and why have you not enriched your fellow-citizens therewith? Such are the questions that have been put to me since my stay in Paris by persons who are highly qualified for taking up a new question.

It is with the object of giving a satisfactory reply and in order to provide a general idea of the system I propose, to free it from the errors with which it has been surrounded and to make known the vicissitudes which have formed an obstacle to it being made known, that I am publishing this Dissertation; which is merely the forerunner of a theory I shall impart as soon as circumstances enable me to indicate the practical rules of the method I am announcing.

From this standpoint, therefore, I entreat the reader to consider this little work. I am well aware that it will raise many difficulties, but it must be borne in mind that they are of such a nature as not to be solved by any amount of reasoning without the assistance of experience.

Experience alone will scatter the clouds and shed light on this important truth:that NATURE AFFORDS A UNIVERSAL MEANS OF HEALING AND PRESERVING MEN. **Dissertation On The Discovery Of Animal Magnetism**

MAN is by nature an Observer. From his birth, his sole occupation is to observe in order to learn how to use his organs. The eye, for instance, would be useless to him if Nature did not cause him to pay attention to the slightest variations of which his observation is capable. It is by

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